

Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



MAY-JUNE 1981



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Vol. 25, No. 3 **MAY-JUNE 1981**

Fred. D. Pfening, Jr. Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

BANDWAGON, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society is published bi-monthly. Editorial, Advertising and Circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221. Advertising rates are: Full page \$80.00, Half-page \$40.00, Quarter page \$20.00, Minimum ad \$18.00. Phone (614) 294-5361.

Subscription rates \$15.00 per year to members, \$15.00 per year to non-members in the United States, \$17.00 per-year outside the U.S.A. Single copies \$2.50 each plus 90¢. Second class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio.

BANDWAGON (USPS 406-390) is published bi-monthly for \$15.00 per year by the Circus Historical Society, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701. Second class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BANDWAGON, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43212.

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. Tom Parkinson, President, 42 Lange Ave., Savoy, Ill. 61874; Richard W. Flint, Vice President, P.O. Box 8383, Rochester, N.Y. 14618; Edward L. Jones, Secretary-Treasurer, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701.

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**THIS MONTH'S
COVER**

The artwork on our cover this issue is an original artist's suggestion for a window card to be used by the Terrell Jacobs Circus in 1944. The design was submitted by the Temple Lithographing Co., Chicago, Ill. It was to have been printed with the title in red, outlined in black, on a yellow background. No actual cards were ever printed.

The Jacobs show opened in Peru, Indiana, on June 9, 1944 for a two day stand. The circus featured Art Mix and his wild west group. Bill Woodcock was in charge of the elephants. The show was presented arena style with a canopy tent from the Tim McCoy Wild West Show covering the seats.

The show lasted only a few days. The original art is from the Pfening collection.

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A DUES REMINDER

In April you were mailed a dues/subscription notice for the year starting May 1, 1981. If you have not as yet mailed your \$15 payment to Ed Jones, CHS treasurer, please do so at once.

You will not receive the July-August issue of the *Bandwagon* if your payment has not been received by the end of July. Mail it today; you do not want to miss a single upcoming issue.

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IN MEMORIAM

CHS member Melvin Miller, Jr. (52) died March 4, 1981 in Washington, D.C. Miller was an early curator of the Ringling Museum of the Circus in Sarasota, where he designed and installed the fine backyard exhibit. After leaving the museum he joined the Ringling-Barnum show and was the first dean of Clown College. He began his circus career as a press agent with the Dailey Bros. Circus in the late 1940s and was later with the Wallenda, Bartok and Ringling-Barnum shows. In 1964 Miller took a historic circus display to the Ringling Continental Circus at the New York Worlds Fair. He was also associated with the advertising business and in recent years had worked with various theme parks in the Washington area.

Frederic A. "Babe" Boudinot (85) died in Chicago on March 18, 1981. Prior to retiring from the Ringling-Barnum show in 1955 he had served the show for 42 years on the advance. Starting as a biller he moved up to the position of general agent and traffic manager. For many years his guidance of the Ringling opposition brigade brought great problems to other shows playing the big show route. Following his retirement from the circus he was associated with General Outdoor Advertising in Chicago.

Louis Goebels (85) died in Thousand

Oaks, Ca. on April 20, 1981. For years he owned the Jungle Land Compound in Thousand Oaks, renting animals and circus equipment to the motion picture industry. He purchased most of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus equipment and later donated many of the H-W wagons to the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wis.

Richard Barstow (73) died in New York on May 2, 1981. He was director and choreographer for the Ringling-Barnum specs for 29 years. His earlier background was on the Broadway stage. Barstow continued working on the New York stage while associated with the Ringling Show.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR HELP

The Circus Historical Society is most appreciative of being listed in the program magazine of the Carson & Barnes Circus.

The Carson & Barnes program has carried an article about the CHS for a number of years. Many people throughout the United States have written asking about becoming CHS members after reading about the organization in this program.

We thank D. R. Miller and the staff of Carson & Barnes for their interest in the CHS and their support in advertising in our Christmas *Bandwagon* for many years.

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Cole Bros. Circus

Season of 1950

by Joseph T. Bradbury

PART TWO UNDER CANVAS

With the completion of the last of the outdoor engagements the Cole Bros. train moved out of Brooklyn and over into New Jersey where the canvas portion of the 1950 season began with a two day stand in Jersey City, July 5-6. The July 15, 1950 *Billboard* told the story of the first canvas date which was almost a disaster in an article headed, "STORM MESSES COLE OPENER UNDER TENT AT JERSEY CITY. TWO CAPACITY HOUSES FOLLOW. OLD CANVAS. LACK OF PAINT GIVE ORG DOWDY APPEARANCE." The article read as follows:

"Cole Bros. had a near blowdown (July 5) but a couple of capacity houses on the 6th. From Ebbetts Field the show moved on to the parking lot of Roosevelt Stadium here. With considerable green help, fumbling through the set-up, opening matinee was delayed until after 4 P.M. The storm which struck shortly after the night show got underway blew down the marquee, stock tent, and other units, and jounced the big top to the extent that the audience numbering several thousand walked out in apprehension. Exodus was orderly and no serious casualties were registered. Wednesday's full houses were due in part to the honoring of ticket stubs from the night before when drenched patrons saw only part of the show. Business was good however. Ticket prices were adults \$1.50 general admission and \$2.75 reserves; kids 70 cents general admission and \$2.00 for reserves.

"Damage resulting from the heavy

blow and the several inches of water which covered the lot were largely rectified the next day. The big top acquired in the winter deal which made Arthur Wirtz and Jim Norris owners of the outfit, somehow held together despite its well-worn appearance.

"Physical appearance of the show in view of the fact that this was the opening date and some sparkle was expected, was dowdy, to say the least. The old canvas with a single piece of new sidewall on the big top offering contrast, showed the wear and tear of past performances. Main tent offered patrons scant protection from the rain which accompanied the high winds.

"Lack of make-ready was exemplified by the scarcity of new paint, on the spot splicing of ropes to replace worn lengths and the crudely lettered admissions sign in pencil on the back of a poster card. In view of the past successes and reputed wealth of the owners, including the star Bill (Hopalong Cassidy) Boyd and Sonja Heine, the physical appearance of the org is not commendable.

"Owners apparently are coasting along with the intention of awaiting profits before sinking fresh dough into the unit, a normal procedure when short bankrolls impose the rule, but not good showmanship otherwise.

"Selling job continues in a minor key with billing apparently out and newspaper ads limited to a few inches.

Photo No. 17 - Cole Bros. big top on lot at Newark, N.J., July 10-11, 1950. Photo by Gordon Carver.

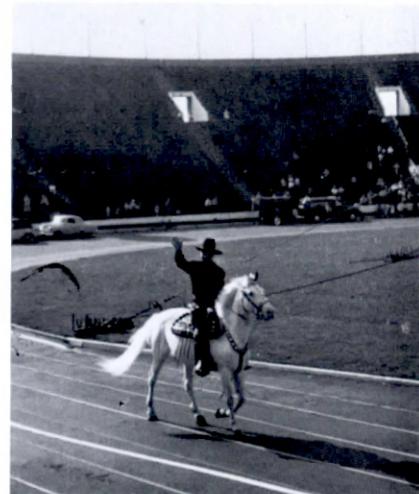


Photo No. 15 - Hopalong Cassidy and "Topper", Cole Bros. performance, Buffalo, N.Y. (Civic Stadium), June 9-10, 1950. Photo by L.A. Sadler.

Performance in 3 rings is creditable. Boyd on his horse, Topper, continues to get a big hand from the moppets who make up a large part of each audience. Program under canvas is essentially the same as presented in stadiums except for the elimination of high acts which could not conform to tent limitations. The 1 hour, 50 minute performance ran smoothly from the start."

CHS member Frank A. Mara, who lives in Jersey City, has furnished us with several articles that appeared in the local newspaper telling about the severe storm which hit the show on July 5, 1950. These are printed here in their entirety.

**JERSEY JOURNAL (Jersey City, NJ) -
July 6, 1950**

13 INJURED IN STORM AT CIRCUS, FRIGHTENED CROWD KEEPS ORDER. TORRENT STOPS SHOW. Some 4000 persons found the thrills of last night's performance of Cole Bros. Circus at Roosevelt Stadium parking lot, a little different than expected.

Kids didn't see Hopalong or his



horse, oldsters worried about their own necks and those of their kids, when the main tent acted like a burlesque queen, everybody got soaked, and the show stopped about half way through.

Samuel Pearson, U.S. weather man, said the rains were of cloudburst proportions.

Try again tonight. Management announced in the near deserted Big Top that anyone attending last night's cancelled performance can see it all tonight if they present ticket stubs at the gate. (Mr. Rain and Mr. Wind not invited.)

About 4000 people were in the 45000 sq. foot Big Top before the rain came down about 8:30. The performance got under way at 8:40 with Terrell Jacobs putting 10 lions and 2 tigers through their paces in the main ring.

The audience began playing musical chairs as rain came through the roof of the tent. It poured down in sheets at the exits and began to inch into the tent proper along the hard surface of the parking lot.

Mrs. William Judkins, as she moved for the third time, said, "This looks like the monsoons of India."

One of a dozen clowns appearing after the animal act stood under one of the holes in the roof, cupped his hands and went about washing his face and behind his ears.

Next 11 attractive girls in scanty costumes appeared. This group, which included Miss Dotty Dale, daughter of Joseph and Mrs. Dalkowski, 11 Lexington Ave., performed an aerial ballet 25 feet above the ground, to the tunes of the circus band.

Puddles of water, outside of the 3 rings, spread to the edge of the seats, causing front-rowers to raise their tootsies off the ground.

Two teams of acrobats went through their paces while workmen dismantled the cage. A juggling act took over while 8 small jumping ponies went into the south ring and 5 into the north. The animals, all wet, went through their paces but the wet hooves caused one of the ponies to fall and he became entangled in his halter while making a turn. He was soon liberated and continued the act.

The circus management allowed people in the south general admission seats to move into empty seats in the reserved seat sections as the rain-soaked canvas roof strained water over them as it poured down from the sky.

Inspector Walter Cieciuch took a 4-man police detail through the area at this juncture. They examined the main tent poles and stakes inside the tent to make sure the weight of water wasn't causing poles to slip out of place.

The clowns, each carrying a brass instrument, formed a band and "played" a few tunes for the audience.



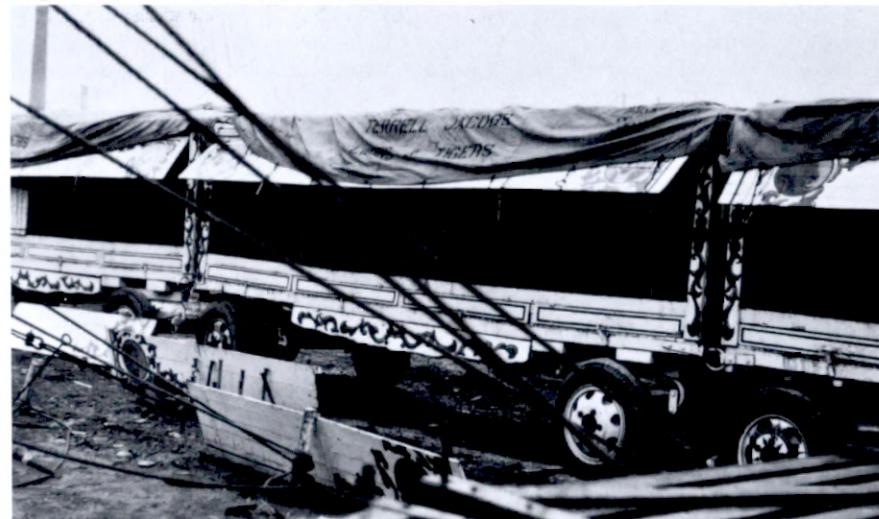
Photo No. 18 - Cole Bros. menagerie top on lot at Newark, N.J., July 10-11, 1950. Light plant wagons are in right foreground. Photo by Gordon Carver.

interspersing their music with pantomime.

Con Colleano, "Toreador of the Tight Wire", mounted the thin strand of wire and went through his intricate routine of Spanish dances, tumbling and somersaulting. The dewey atmosphere caused some trouble in the somersaulting. He did the flip once and landed on his feet on the wire the first time, fell the second and third times, and succeeded on the fourth after an attendant had wiped the wire and he had dried his slippers feet in the sawdust.

Next on the program and what proved to be the last for the evening was the performance of 10 elephants in the 3 rings simultaneously. Miss Dale and 2 other beautiful girls, led them by the trunk, had themselves heaved into the air onto the backs of the elephants. The elephants performed flawlessly for their attractive masters. At the conclusion of the act, one of the elephants was brought to kneel with her head against

Photo No. 19 - Terrell Jacobs three cages on Cole Bros. lot, Newark, N.J., July 10-11, 1950. Photo by Gordon Carver.



the railing separating the stands from the arena. Rest of the beasts came around the ring on the double, splattering water into the stands as they thundered by, and placed their forefeet on the backs of the beasts ahead of them.

Hopalong Cassidy, alias William Boyd, had arrived in his black station wagon (bearing Cal. plates) with his name on the sides and was parked inside the tent at the performer's entrance. The announcer said he was going on after the aerial act.

The wind supplied the aerial act. It blew the canvas walls loose on either side of the big tent, uprooted a few stakes and poles and caused the tent to rise at the edges and shake throughout. The aerial acts climbed down from their perches aloft.

But for the quick action of some men in the audience, panic might have resulted. The men calmed the audience till circus employees, police and the M.C. could reassure them that the tent would hold.

Hudson County Police rushed every available man to the scene. Sixteen police cars removed wet spectators to dry ground.

A 4-foot hole was ripped in the canvas roof near the N.W. exit by the wind causing some people to get an unexpected bath. The square canvas shelter



over the turnstiles and ticket taker booths was knocked down by the wind.

The wind also flattened a 100 foot tent N.W. of the Big Top causing some confusion. Half of the tent was used as a stable, the other half as a dressing room for women performers.

When the tent collapsed, all women and horses escaped injury. Four of the horses manged to get free and circus employees spent the next 15 minutes lassoing the galloping ponies in the rain.

The women scheduled to appear later in the program had street clothing on. Miss Dale and the other 2 elephant girls were still in scanty costumes when the tent folded with their street clothing inside.

A taxi was summoned and Miss Dale took her half-clad co-workers to her parents' home for the night.

Detective John Waldron at Police Headquarters was notified at 9:30 that the tent might collapse. Inspector Mike Cusack ordered the Emergency Squad and all available detectives under Captain Edward Gordon to the scene to augment the 80 man police detail there. Additional radio cars and Medical Center ambulances were also sent to the scene.

A section of the menagerie tent was blown down by the gale and the elephants were staked out in the open. Elephants are known to fear thunder and lightning of which there was plenty, but they were well behaved and went through their routine in the arena in flawless style despite the raging wind and rain. Staked out after, they appeared to enjoy their watering down, particularly relished by elephants.

Det. Waldron, on the phone, requested the major bus lines to dispatch buses to the scene to pick up people streaming into the night from the "threatened" tent. First buses arrived in 15 minutes. Police, roustabouts, and others aided to carry children and elderly across the ankle-deep water.

(Here follows a list of injured, mostly children with minor cuts, etc. Also Jos. Virella, show employee, injured on the leg by a stake. A local man was listed as suffering a possible skull fracture by a falling pole at the matinee.)

Photo No. 20 - Cole Bros. sideshow on lot, Newark, N.J., July 10-11, 1950. Photo by Gordon Carver.

JERSEY JOURNAL (Jersey City, N.J.) - July 6, 1950

FEW CONFIDENT VOICES STILLED FEARS. PREVENTED PANIC (Hal Kierce) Fear clutched at the hearts of some 4000 persons under the main tent of Cole Bros. Circus at Roosevelt Stadium parking lot last night as the canvas structure started to shimmy like a fan dancer under the force of a sudden gale.

Nature, as if pulling up her stockings, sent exploratory fingers of rain-laden wind under the canvas walls at the northwest and south-east exits last night and whipped up the stakes holding the walls to the ground.

Free of her "shoes," the wall and the poles supporting the canvas roof went up in the air where they shouldn't have gone, billowing the edge of the roof at these two points in and out like a kid blowing bubble gum.

All eyes turned from the center of the deserted three rings as loosened walls cracked back and forth and the roof shimmied to the accompaniment of beating rain, claps of thunder and flashes of lightning.

Maternal and paternal instincts to protect the young, desires of self-preservation and a very real fear that the tent would be falling on them any minute, moved everyone out of the seats, eyes casting for the nearest exit.

"Sit down, take it easy. This thing isn't going to fall in."

"No rushing - be calm - everybody will get out of here. Just take it easy."

Not words to record for posterity, not heroes, not people used to handling crowds and acquainted with people on the edge of panic.

Just a couple of men in the audience who paid \$2.75 to see the show, uttered these words.

A mad rush, a stampede for the exits by the youngster-filled crowd was averted by some ordinary citizens who used their heads instead of their legs.

The few became many as more men joined in and advised to stick it out. The clowns, roustabouts, police and finally, the M.C. on the P.A. system.

The spirit of festivity was gone however. What could have happened

was fresh in the minds of the audience. They began to leave in small groups.

A few people walked self-consciously down the aisles, possibly feeling they were displaying a lack of courage by leaving halfway through the show.

As the wind flayed the loose canvas about and more shudders were noted in the roof, more people slowly got up and walked down to the flooded arena.

Within a half hour a steady stream of circus goers moved steadily toward the exits, jumping from one coil of rope to another, or sloshing through the ankle deep water.

At 9:30 when the circus officials noted most of the audience had left, it was decided to call the show off. An announcement was made over the P.A. system that the ticket stubs would be honored at tonight's performance.

JERSEY JOURNAL (Jersey City, N.J.) - July 7, 1950

"SCARE GONE, CIRCUS PLAYS TO CAPACITY. While more than 5000 persons witnessed the final performance of the Cole Bros. Circus at the Roosevelt Stadium parking lot, employees completed packing of everything but the main tent they were using. The 3-ring circus, completely recovered from the sudden squall which caused 4000 people to leave the Big Top Wednesday, was setting up in Paterson today for a 2-day stand.

Last night's performance before a capacity audience went off per schedule. The clowns drew applause, the aerialists and acrobats gave all a thrill, animal acts received favorable comment and Hopalong Cassidy rode around with his standard act.

This route card listing the dates for the month of July is typical of those issued by Cole Bros. Circus during the 1950 season. Pfening collection.

OFFICIAL ROUTE CARD		
COLE BROS. CIRCUS		
WORLD'S GREATEST SHOW		
Featuring Wm. Boyd	"HOPALONG CASSIDY"	In Person
PATENT	1950	
Permanent Address:	1800 WEST MADISON STREET	CHICAGO 12, ILL.
JERSEY CITY, N. J.	WEDNESDAY	JULY 5
	THURSDAY	" 6
PATERSON, N. J.	FRIDAY	JULY 7
	SATURDAY	" 8
NEWARK, N. J.	SUNDAY	JULY 9
	MONDAY	" 10
WILMINGTON, DEL.	TUESDAY	JULY 11
BALTIMORE, MD.	WEDNESDAY	JULY 12
	THURSDAY	" 13
WASHINGTON, D. C.	FRIDAY	JULY 14
	SATURDAY	" 15
	SUNDAY	" 16
PHILADELPHIA, PA.	MONDAY	JULY 17
	TUESDAY	" 18
	WEDNESDAY	" 19
	THURSDAY	" 20
	FRIDAY	" 21
	SATURDAY	" 22
HORACE LAIRD, Mail Agent		

An official of the circus said he had been in 40 of the 48 states and had never found the police, their superiors, and city officials as cooperative as in Jersey City.

An official, commenting on the people's fright received Wednesday night when the big tent went into a rhumba routine from the force of the wind, stated the people experienced a very understandable scare since many of them had not been to a real traveling circus for a score of years. It was pointed out that the last circus was in Jersey City at Boyle's 30 Acres about 1929. Prior to that the circus made regular appearances at the North St. grounds now transformed into Washington Park.

Officials explained fear of the tent collapsing was groundless as it was erected by men who have been putting them up for years. He said it was secured by long pegs driven deep in the cinder-covered parking lot, plus 2 safety wires attached to each important rope, and a safety wire which prevented the tent from collapsing.

James Gilson, 3, suffered contusions of the head when he fell 15 feet from the grandstand at the matinee, police report. He was detained at the Medical Center for observation.

After the stay in Paterson, today and tomorrow, the circus will make a 2-day stand in Newark, it was announced."

Following Jersey City the show remained in the state and moved to Paterson for two days, July 7-8, where it found solid business with crowds close to capacity at all four performances. Dick Best reported brisk business for the sideshow since it was now back in its regular midway spot. Next came a short hop to Newark which was made quickly and all units were set up and ready to go in plenty of time but inclement weather hurt during the two days in the city, July 9-10. Heavy rains made the lot a quagmire and held patronage to about 300 persons at the first show. The downpour continued through the two days.

The show was next scheduled to play Wilmington, Del. on July 11 and billing had gone up advertising the date but the stand was cancelled and Cole moved on to Baltimore, Md. for two days, July 12-13, which was followed by three days in Washington, D.C., July 14-16.

The July 22, 1950 *Billboard* covered the canvas stands to date in an article with headlines, "COLE BROS. ADDS BILL CAR. CURTIS, OTHER STAFFERS JOIN. BLOWS STAND AT WILMINGTON. ADVANCE SALE SYSTEM SET FOR ALL STOPS. BIZ SO-SO." The article mentioned the show had blown its date in Wilmington but gave no reason for it. The initial matinee in Washington had drawn only 2,000. Night shows only were set for Friday and Saturday and the run



Photo No. 21 - Cole Bros. on the lot at Newark, N.J., July 10-11, 1950. From right to left are marquee, menagerie, and top. Photo by Gordon Carver.

would close with a Sunday matinee only. Plentiful publicity was scored in the Washington papers by Tom King and the weather was good. James Gephart who handled the traffic manager's tasks during the tour of ball parks and arenas had now taken over full duties as general agent. Wirtz personally had done much of the earlier routing.

William L. Oliver came on this week as manager of the No. 1 bill car which opened in Wilmington. He had one semi-trailer and four station wagons. The No. 2 car under Roy Traynor has three men and one station wagon. Jack Adams is brigade agent. A full line of paper is to be used, contrasting with extremely light billing during the first half of the season. Oliver has a number of the same billers who started with him on the Dailey Bros. show. The press staff enlarged now includes Tom King, Floree Galt, C. Foster Bill, Merail Fugit, and Eddie Howe, who handles contracting. Bill Curtis, veteran canvas boss and lot superintendent, has taken over those duties for Cole Bros. Other staff men on the show include Frank Zazarra, boss usher; Ray Huttick, supt. of front door; Roxie McAleer, boss ticket seller; Denver Kline, novelties; Jimmy Brown, diner; Fred Donovan, legal adjuster; Dan Dix, contracting agent; V.R. Fleming, treasurer; Lorne Russell, auditor; Karl Knudson and Bill Walsh, 24 hr. men. Other notes in the article said that to handle the advance ticket sales and mail order set-up in each town, McAleer has five men ahead. The top staffers of the show remain the same with Bill Horstman, corporation vice president in charge of the circus and advance and assistant to Mr. Wirtz. Billy Burke is vice president in charge of the performance and production manager. Jack Tavlin is general manager and Frank Orman, manager. Leo Hamilton continues as equestrian director and Red Larkin is announcer; Jack Plummer, bandmaster, and Larry Davis, menagerie and elephant superintendent. It was noted that many of the new men com-

ing on as the canvas tour began are veterans of pre-1950 Cole Bros. editions while others have come from Ringling, Clyde Beatty, and Dailey Bros. Final item said that the advance crew which started work at Wilmington finished billing Washington on the 11th and began putting up paper in Philadelphia the next day. Plans call for a heavy schedule of one day stands including Sundays through upstate New York and then westward to Los Angeles. Vander Barbette has left for Europe in search of talent.

Although this article said that Leo Hamilton was still equestrian director the fact is that Milt Herritt soon took over and served in that capacity for the biggest portion of the canvas tour.

The show's stand in Washington was termed as very disappointing. It next moved northward to Philadelphia for a six day run, July 17-22. Unfortunately the take was again poor. The July 29, 1950 *Billboard* told the story of the week in Philadelphia with heading, "PHILLY STAND BAD FOR COLE. Top Crowd Totals 2,500 as Despite Near Perfect Weather and Extensive Advance Promotion." The article said that Cole had made a poor showing in the city of Brotherly Love with no performance pulling over 2,500. July 21 was the poorest of the stand with only 800 at the matinee and a similar number in the evening. The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin built a heavy promotion for Bill Boyd prior to the date. Gimbel's handled the advance ticket sale which was very light. Dick Best's sideshow and circus concessions all suffered from the lack of big show patronage. Among damaging factors contributing to the poor stand was a billing error with some papers giving a different lot location. The site used was the Fox Street and Abbottsford Ave. location played earlier this year by Ringling-Barnum. Only fair bus service was provided to the lot which isn't situated near any of the city's trolley lines. The lot was laid out with the cookhouse tent in front leading to some confusion on the part of the customers as to the location of the entrance. Signs which may have alleviated the difficulty were absent as was floodlighting. The vacation season was on and this also affected

the show's take. An opening night mishap occurred when the net used by the Zacchinis collapsed causing injuries to Silvana, the girl member of the duo. She was taken to the hospital but suffered no permanent, serious complications. Final items in the article said that there had been a strike at Westinghouse earlier but it had been settled last week. Labor conditions in the city are good with money plentiful. The arsenal, one of the largest single industries, was seeking new employees.

CHS member Bill Elbirt, who caught the Cole show in Philadelphia and furnished us with a number of photographs, recalls his visit to the circus as follows.

"I caught the Cole show in Philadelphia on the day it arrived. It had shown in Washington on a Sunday and it was Monday when the train arrived in Philly. It was spotted at "D" and Venango Streets, the same location that Ringling-Barnum had unloaded a few weeks earlier. This was an industrial area fenced in with only two gates. I tried to get into the area to film the train but for some reason they had roughies at both gates and I was literally given the bum's rush which I had never experienced before nor since. I have often reflected on this and the only reason I can come up with is that I was carrying a camera. I had no trouble getting close to the Ringling train. I recall that the unloading was very slow and supposed they were short of help.

"They had a very long haul to the lot which was a parking lot owned by Philco-Ford Corporation and located at Fox Street and Abbotsford Road in a remote northwest area of the town. The set-up was very slow and here again I got invited to leave. Since the show did not have much longer to live I just wonder if they were leary of anyone with a camera. The show was on the shabby side. I never did get back to see a performance but fans I talked to in later years said attendance was very poor for the whole run.

"In my opinion it was a mistake to book Cole into Philly a few weeks after Ringling-Barnum. Philly was then and still is a Ringling town. I think the combination of being second in, on an unknown lot, and with very poor publicity made for a very weak stand."

Hopalong Cassidy left the show at the conclusion of the Philadelphia engagement and returned to Hollywood for motion picture and TV work. His appearance in the Cole program since the canvas tour began had not brought in the customers the management had hoped for, however it was other factors which had devastated the route of late. The show was playing major eastern cities, Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia only a few weeks after Ringling-

Barnum had been there and the natives' circus money for the season had already been spoken for. Another adverse factor was that even though the show was using billing paper it was still in very limited amounts and not put up far enough in advance. However, in all probability it was the very severe economic recession the nation was in that caused the most damage, the same bugaboo that had killed the 1949 Cole show.

After Philly the show then began a series of one day stands, the first coming at Plainfield, N.J., July 23, followed by Easton, Pa. the next day where there was mediocre business. There was a tough haul to a new lot in Easton. Local trucks were rented to pull wagons up a steep hill when the show's tractors proved too light for the job. It took an hour to get the pole wagon up the incline. Lack of business in the city was credited to rain and weak advance advertising. Elephants nearly stampeded when a fire startled them as they were being returned to the train that evening but handlers kept them under control.

Cole next moved into New York state with one day stands coming at Poughkeepsie, Albany, Schenectady, Utica, and Syracuse, before taking off Sunday, July 30. Business continued to be poor to mediocre and rumors soon began making the rounds in the circus world that the Cole Bros. tour would not last long. Not only was business bad, the show was encountering much difficulty along the route when using the caterpillar tractors to pull wagons to and from the lot. CHS member Allen Stopyra of Syracuse, N.Y. recalls such difficulty when Cole Bros. was the last circus to use the McCarthy Island lot in that city during its stand of July 29, 1950. The train arrived in Syracuse early but the first wagon didn't get to the lot until about 10 A.M. The steel threaded cats on the city streets were accused by local officials of damaging

**Photo No. 22 - Cole Bros. elephant herd on lot at Philadelphia, Pa., July 17, 1950.
Photo by Bill Elbirt.**

the pavement and the show was ordered to stop using them. That evening they had to hire local trucks to haul the wagons back to the runs. The following article telling of the troubles with the city officials appeared in the local Syracuse papers.

"HARMON ORDERS CIRCUS TRACTORS OFF CITY STREETS. The Cole Bros. Circus making a one-day appearance here today, isn't hopping the way it did when Hopalong Cassidy was with the show. Its present movement is causing considerable distress.

"Public Works Commissioner Frank Harmon directed circus officials to keep their tractors off the city streets when they leave tonight. Tractor treads reportedly chewed up W. Onondaga Street pavement today, although Harmon described it was 'faintly marked.'

"He also told them to use a different route when moving equipment back to the railroad yards.

"A circus press agent told newsmen that business had been off and the show may have to disband after its next performance in Rochester, quite a change from the days when Hopalong was packing crowds in."

"After Syracuse the show continued in New York with stands at Rochester, July 31, followed by Hornell and Binghamton. It then moved into Pennsylvania at Scranton, August 3, after which came Hazelton and Bloomsburg.

The Aug. 5, 1950 *Billboard* told of the present difficulties and uncertainty of Cole Bros. in an article headed, "COLE'S FUTURE IS UP IN AIR. Continuation of Outdoor Tour Mulled by Wirtz in Syracuse. Stadium Biggie Routs Rumor of Closing There. Reveals Tavlin, other may Take Over Operation under Canvas. Says his Prime Interest is in Presentation Indoors.

Syracuse, N.Y., July 29 - Arthur M. Wirtz, co-owner of Cole Bros. Circus arrived to decide whether and how long he will keep the show on the road. He said the show definitely would not close here and would play Rochester.



N.Y., Monday, July 31. — 'I am not too interested in the outdoor show. This is primarily an indoor show built around Bill (Hopalong Cassidy) Boyd.' Boyd, top feature closed a week ago at end of the Philadelphia run. Wirtz says that notice has been given that the show will close, but it is the customary notice to permit operation of the show on a week to week basis and to permit closing any time. Wirtz was to confer with Bill Horstman, executive on the show, to study business reports and decide what to do. He said he was considering an early closing. At same time negotiations are underway with Jack Tavlin, general manager, a former owner, for a possible set up next summer, but no deal made as yet.

"It is possible Tavlin and others will operate equipment in summer as an outdoor show and Wirtz as an indoor show during the winter.

"Wirtz stated he will continue operation of the circus at indoor dates including Chicago. Said he might be interested in summer operation if he had another Bill Boyd to feature, but he repeated that he is not sure he wants to continue outdoor operation.

"A major factor in closing the show is that much of Wirtz staff from other enterprises, including the Chicago Stadium, is tied up with the circus while they are needed to prepare for next winter's events in Chicago, these staffers include Horstman, Billy Burke, and Tom King. Horstman and Burke are vice presidents of the circus. King is press man on the show and all three men are from the Chicago Stadium.

"Wirtz confirms a new big top is ordered for the 1951 season and that Vander Barbette is in Europe scouting talent for Cole Bros.

"All interest in the show now is by the company founded by Wirtz and associates this spring. New money might be added if deal with Tavlin should develop."

A final note said that Silvania Zacchini who was injured when the net broke in Philadelphia was still in the hospital.

GREATEST SHOW IN TOWN - CHICAGO DAILY NEWS

SAT., JULY 29
McCARTHY ISLAND

Matinee 3:00 Evenings 8:30

COLE BROS.
GIGANTIC RAILROAD
CIRCUS

"Packed with Thrill,
Chill and Skill.
We had a heck of a
good time" — NEW YORK
DAILY MIRROR

"THE SHOW WITH THE STARS"
FEATURING:

★ The HANNEFORDS
BRASH BUFFOONS & BAREBACK BALLERINA
"ARE SHOW STOPPERS" —Columbus, O. Dispatch

★ TERRELL JACOBS
PEER OF ALL WILD ANIMAL TRAINERS
"A REALLY FINE ANIMAL ACT" —Detroit News

★ CON COLLEANO
TOREADOR OF THE TIGHT WIRE
"BRINGS THE HOUSE DOWN" —N. Y. Times

★ DORITA KONYOT
GLAMOROUS EQUESTRIENNE
"THE ULTIMATE IN GRACE" —Eric, Pa. Times

Plus Dozens of Stellar Acts
and Cast of Hundreds

Popular Prices

Photo No. 23 - Cole Bros. during setup on lot at Philadelphia, Pa., July 17, 1950. Caterpillar tractors and cages are in foreground, menagerie in background. Photo by Bill Elbirt.



Newspaper advertisement for Cole Bros. stand at Syracuse, N.Y., July 29, 1950. The show used this style with no mention of Hopalong Cassidy after the star attraction left following the Philadelphia engagement. Allan Stopryra Collection.

Leaving Syracuse the show moved on a Sunday run to Rochester and by the time it got there Wirtz had made the decision to definitely close for the season. After the big top had been erected, Johnny Herriott recalls that Mr. Wirtz asked his father, Milt, equestrian director, to assemble all personnel inside the big top so he could address them. Wirtz then told them that the circus would close for the season after performances the following Saturday, August 5, at Bloomsburg, Pa. Johnny recalls that immediately after Mr. Wirtz' talk people, especially the acts, started a mad rush for nearby telephones to try and find bookings.

Johnny Herriott recalls that at Hazleton, Pa., August 4, the day before the close, the show had more trouble with the local police who charged wagons were damaging city streets. Actually it was the Caterpillar tractors pulling the wagons to the lot which created most of the heat as evidently they were not equipped with the type of track shoes designed to prevent damage to the pavement. The wagons of course, all had pneumatic or solid rubber tired wheels.

As noted, the 1950 Cole Bros. tour came to an end at Bloomsburg, Pa., Aug. 5. The following stands which had been booked and billed were cancelled; Aug. 7, Williamsport, Pa.; Aug. 8, York, Pa.; Aug. 9, Hagerstown, Md.; Aug. 10, Cumberland, Md.; Aug. 11, Clarksburg, W. Va.; Aug. 12, Parkersburg, W. Va.; and Aug. 13, Athens, Ohio.

The generally poor business which Cole's under canvas tour had drawn was not unusual. Other shows were also having a rough go of it. Seal Bros. had closed July 3; Dales Bros. called it quits, July 26, and Cape Bros. closed August 1. Only Kelly-Miller, Cole & Walters (No. 2 Kelly-Miller show), and King Bros. were having a good year. The large Biller Bros. motorized circus which had such a rough time in 1949 was finding it no better in 1950. The country was still in the economic doldrums it had been in for a year and a half. The Korean War which had been on since late June had not as yet generated the business pickup which would turn the coming 1951 and 1952 circus seasons into winners for most shows.

The Aug. 12, 1950 Billboard covered the Cole Bros. closing at Bloomsburg, Pa. as follows: "COLE BROS. GOES TO BARN. Tavlin Hopes for 1951 Org. Weak biz sends show to quarters at Wirtz's St. Louis Arena for season.



"Bloomsburg, Pa., Aug. 5 - Cole Bros. Circus called it a season here today and headed its 30 cars for new quarters at St. Louis. The closing came after a 15-week season of generally weak to mediocre business."

"Decision to close the show was announced to personnel last weekend and was not unexpected. Arthur M. Wirtz, co-owner, had arrived on the show to set the date, and notice already had been posted.

"The show is expected to arrive Monday or Tuesday in St. Louis and will go into quarters at the Arena, a Wirtz-controlled stadium, where trackage and other facilities are available.

"Jack Tavlin, general manager of the show, said Barnes-Carruthers Theatrical Enterprises, Chicago, might book elephants or other portions of the Cole show for fair dates.

"He said Wirtz had gotten almost all of his investment out of the circus but that the Chicago impresario was somewhat 'disillusioned' about circus business as a money maker.

"Meanwhile it was reported Tavlin, owner of the show in 1949, and others were dickering with the present owners to buy summer rights to the show. It was understood that Tavlin was contemplating using 15 cars of Cole Bros. equipment for a 1951 tour. However, the deal was still hanging fire.

"Object of cutting the show in half

Photo No. 24 - Cole Bros. lead stock and menagerie wagon No. 42 on lot at Philadelphia, Pa., July 17, 1950. Photo by Bill Elbirt.

would be to reduce the nut, largely railroad costs, and to ease the lot problem, it was reported.

"Wirtz said last week, in commenting on the possible deal, that he planned to remain in the indoor circus business and would operate the show at his stadium in Chicago next spring. Possibility that Bill (Hopalong Cassidy) Boyd might return to the show for the major indoor stands was raised this week.

"A report that the Cole show would reopen this fall for West Coast dates with Boyd back in the feature spot was not verified.

"Definite announcement of the closing date was made at a meeting in the big top. Advance crew members came back to the show at Scranton, Pa. (3), to be paid off. Some personnel had left the show earlier and more, particularly working men, left following the announcement. The resulting shortage of hands slowed movement of the show during the remainder of the week. At Binghamton, N.Y., Wednesday (2), many youngsters were recruited to

Photo No. 25 - Cole Bros. dining tent on lot at Philadelphia, Pa., July 17, 1950. Photo by Bill Elbirt.



help. The show drew a half-house matinee and a three-quarter night house there.

"At Syracuse (29) the show had two three-quarter houses. Rochester, N.Y. (31) gave a half and a full house.

"However, business at other recent stands had been weak. The show was playing with only six days' notice and very little billing.

Tax Factor Enters

"Speculation about Wirtz's decision to close the show included a possibility that it was influenced by income tax regulations which would make it beneficial to close a losing show before it had been in operation six months. The circus is operated by a corporation formed early last spring.

"Advertising has been blamed by some observers for Cole Bros.' ills. While Bill Boyd was the top feature the show frequently omitted mention of other big acts, and persons in several cities reported the public was not aware of the full program accompanying Boyd.

"Newspapers along the route reported unusual publicity methods, and some operators of ball parks or arenas, used by the show before it turned to its big top, stated that promotion was not fully effective.

Advertising Limited

"Newspaper ads during most of the show's tour were patterned after those of stageshows and, although those used late in the season followed a circus style, they substituted comments from newspaper reviews for the usual listing of features.

"Cole's use of outdoor advertising was restricted for the entire tour. During the open-air portion of the route the show relied largely on a limited number of 24-sheets. Before the Washington stand, a bill crew was organized and more press agents were added along with other personnel. However, the bill crew was only a week ahead of the circus and used a moderate amount of date sheets and tack cards.

"The circus opened at Chicago April 21 and, although a Stadium record was set on one weekend, over-all business, while profitable there, was below anticipations. Moving to Detroit it was the same story. Turnouts in ball parks through Ohio and Pennsylvania were weak. Cole Bros. played Yankee Stadium in New York and Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, closing in the latter spot July 4, but again business was below that anticipated.

Canvas Tour Weak

"Cole began its under-canvas trek July 5 at Jersey City, N.J., in a heavy storm. After several one-day stops, some of which gave good business, the circus moved to Washington and Philadelphia where business was off.

"Wirtz and others bought the show last winter after it had put in a poor

1949 season. The new owners announced in February that Bill (Hopalong Cassidy) Boyd would be the headliner and that he, Wirtz, and Jim Norris, Chicago grain broker, each owned a third interest.

"The Cole title has been prominent since 1935 when Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell framed it as a new org. Its early closing marks the first mid-season loss of a major big top because of business conditions since 1938, when several shows folded and others, including Cole, closed early."

As mentioned in the *Billboard* account the Cole Bros. train moved from Bloomsburg to the Wirtz-owned St. Louis, Mo. Arena. Johnny Herriott has vivid memories of the event. He recalls that Jack Tavlin had left after the finish at Bloomsburg and Frank Orman was in charge of the show. The various acts all departed to different parts of the country, but anyone who wanted to was permitted to ride the train to St. Louis. On arrival in St. Louis Wirtz and Billy Burke were on hand to meet the train. The rail cars were parked on sidings adjacent to the arena. The cookhouse was set up under canvas and the menagerie tent was erected to house the elephants, ring stock, and cages. Larry Davis had left as elephant supt. and P.J. Jones was in charge of the herd. The elephant, Louie, ran away one day and had to be rounded up. Milt Herriott was in charge of the ring stock.

People retained by the show lived on the train and were paid regularly. Johnny recalls that no improvements were made to any of the existing buildings of the St. Louis Arena complex but evidently the show planned to establish permanent quarters there. He recalls the place really turned into a sort of gypsy camp with the cookhouse, flies, garbage, and animals in the area. Because of these generally unsightly conditions, local residents around the arena got up a petition to force the show to leave.

The heat from local citizens and officials continued to the extent that it was evident Wirtz had to find other quarters for the show. In early October it was decided that the Cole equipment, animals, and personnel would move to Peru, Ind. and utilize the existing quarters of Terrell Jacobs near that city for the time being and add such structures as necessary for the site to become the permanent quarters for the show. Wirtz already held title to the Jacobs property.

The October 14, 1950 *Billboard* in an article headed "COLE QUARTERS TO BE IN INDIANA" said that Cole Bros. would move its winterquarters to Peru from St. Louis. Arrangements for moving the show are being made this week after residents in the vicinity of the St. Louis Arena complained of the show being located there. It was believed

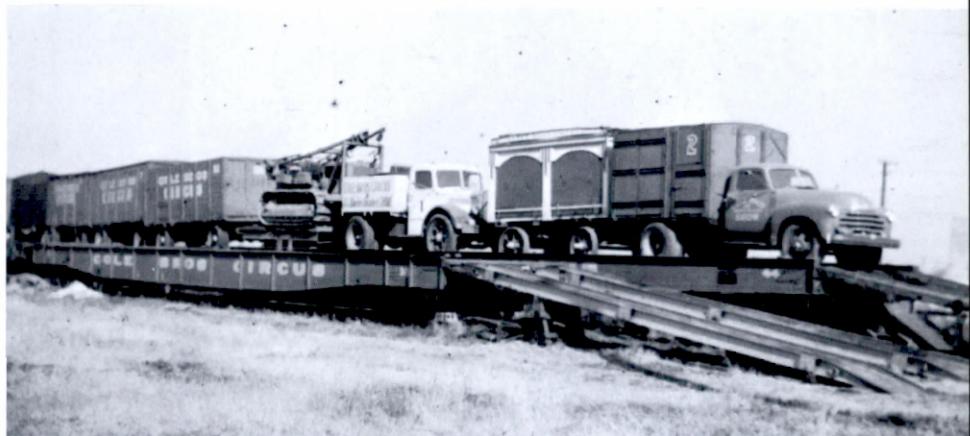


Photo No. 26 - Final unloading of the Cole Bros. train at Peru, Ind. following arrival from St. Louis, October 1950. Pfening Collection.

likely it would be taken to the Terrell Jacobs farm at Peru. The farm as well as the St. Louis Arena are both controlled by Arthur Wirtz, Chicago, co-owner of Cole Bros. The move of the Cole show to Peru would mark the first time since 1938 that a major show had wintered in the one-time circus capital.

The next issue of *Billboard* completed the story and said the show was scheduled to leave St. Louis, Monday, Oct. 16 and arrive at Peru, Oct. 17 and begin moving into its new winter-quarters. Animals will be housed in barns at Terrell Jacobs' farm south of Peru, while wagons and other equipment will be stored at a former naval base near Peru which the city is leasing from the Federal government. A Pennsylvania Railroad spur near the base will be extended to allow storage of the show train. The private car will be parked on a track at the Fred Russell coal yard. Peru city and Chamber of Commerce officials cooperated in

Photo No. 27 - Cole Bros. elephant car No. 34 on siding at Bunker Hill Naval Station, Peru, Ind., October 1950. Pfening Collection.

arranging for the show's set-up. Jessie I. Murden was instrumental in arranging the move and negotiated for it with Arthur M. Wirtz, head of Cole Bros.

Johnnie Herriott well remembers the move from St. Louis to Peru. Johnny and his father had been with the elephants which appeared at the National Dairy Exposition in Indianapolis and had just returned to St. Louis the day before the train was to go to Peru. The elephants had been transported from Indianapolis in a regular system baggage car and were then loaded almost immediately into the circus elephant car for the move to Peru. On arrival in that city the train was parked on the siding at the former Bunker Hill Naval Base and unloaded. Wagons carrying the cookhouse, harness shop, and equipment needed for everyday work were taken overland to Terrell Jacobs place. The rest were put inside a huge hanger at Bunker Hill. Personnel continued to live on the train and Frank Orman occupied the private car. Workingmen had to be moved back and forth each day from the cars to quarters. At Jacobs place the menagerie tent was erected and a training ring put inside it. Construction work at the farm began immediately with a permanent type cookhouse and ring barn being built. The existing structures at Jacobs place were all put into use and a hippo





Photo No. 28 - Cole Bros. stock cars on siding at Bunker Hill Naval Station, Peru, Ind., October 1950. The three cars at right were those used during the 1950 season. Note portion of a fourth stock car at extreme left (full view of this car is shown in Photo No. 29). It is believed this car was

stored in Louisville during the 1949 and 1950 seasons and was sent to Peru shortly after Cole Bros. arrived there in October 1950. Loaded inside the car were harness making and other shop equipment which had been left in storage in Louisville. Pfening Collection.

tank was built in the lion barn.

The Nov. 4, 1950 *Billboard* went into details about the new buildings being constructed at the Jacobs farm in Peru. The article said that construction of permanent buildings to house the Cole show started October 23. Included are a ring barn, and one for horses and elephants. The equipment stored at the nearby naval base will probably be later moved to Jacobs' place. It was rumored that Wirtz had turned down offers from potential buyers of the show but he could not be reached for comment.

In the meantime there had been no further mention in the trade publications on Tavlin's plan to lease part of the show for a canvastour in the summer of 1951. The Nov. 11, 1950 *Billboard* had an article headed, "SUMMER POLICY NOT DECIDED FOR COLE SHOW. CHI BOW SKEDDED: ORMAN HEADS CREW AT PERU QTRS". The article said that no policies for Cole beyond plans for a spring opening at the Chicago Stadium have been made according to William Horstman who recently

returned to Chicago from Peru. It was mentioned that Frank Orman is manager at Peru and has a staff of about 40, including L. M. Russell, treasurer; P. J. Jones, elephants, Milt and John Herriott, horses, and Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Luckey. Construction work is under way at Peru and more is planned but not yet contracted. Bookings for show acts are pending and the indoor dates have not yet been finished, Horstman said.

Johnny Herriott says that when Cole Bros. left its Louisville quarters in the spring of 1949 some equipment had been stored there and never was shipped to Ojus. This equipment included harness making equipment. This was now shipped to Peru and Waxey, the long time harness maker, got to work making sets of new harness for the show shortly after it moved in from St. Louis. Waxey used a small concrete house at Jacobs place for his shop. It is believed that at the time of this shipment of the equipment which had been stored in Louisville the two pony floats, Mother Goose, and Old Woman in Shoe also came along. These

show after it arrived in Peru. Although the car had evidently been retitled recently note the shoddy condition of the roof and sides indicating it had not been on the road for the past two seasons.



Photo No. 29 - Cole Bros. stock car No. 30 on siding at Bunker Hill Naval Station, Peru, Ind., October 1950. It is believed this car which had been in storage in Louisville was shipped to join the rest of the Cole

floats had not been used on the show either in 1949 or 1950. It is also possible the sea lion cage which was not on the show those years was shipped to Peru at this time. Actually the sea lion cage "disappeared" from time it was last on the show in 1948 until it turned up at the Vincennes, Indiana Zoo in 1952. More will be said about this cage wagon later.

The Nov. 25, 1950 *Billboard* carried this advertisement.

"Now Available for Indoor Dates. Cole Bros. Circus featuring, The Famous Cole Bros. Elephants; Terrell Jacobs Wild Animals; Three Rings of Liberty Horses and Ponies. Also other working stock, menagerie, and circus equipment. Available as a complete unit, or will lease separately. Acts. Animals, or Equipment—Barnes-Carruthers Theatrical Enterprises."

The Dec. 9, 1950 *Billboard* gave more news about the construction project at the Peru quarters by saying the building was progressing rapidly under the direction of William Horstman and Cliff Hutchcroft, contractor. A new office will be the first to be completed with the ring stock barns next. Joe Juta has done a good job with his crew in getting the steam and water line pipes underground before freezing.

The Dec. 23, 1950 *Billboard* had the final news from the Peru quarters before the end of the year with an article headed, "COLE SPENDS 30G ON PERU W.Q. WORK. Undecided in 1951." The piece mentioned that plans for 1951 were still unsettled according to Horstman. The work going on at quarters includes some preparation for the show's opening at the Chicago Stadium in the spring but any work for a road tour still awaits a decision as to whether or not the circus will make an extended tour. About 30,000 has been spent for construction work at Peru. The elephant barn has been augmented by the addition of a concrete block lean-to along one side and end and horses are quartered there. On the other side of the barn work is progressing on one 50 x 66 ft. ring barn wing and a second wing for kitchen, dormitory, and heating facilities. Between the two wings and along the side of the barn is to be a series of office rooms for departmental heads. One end of the barn will be equipped as a shop. The dormitory will accommodate about 36 persons. Provisions are being made for enlarging these quarters later if additional space should be needed. The show's equipment stored at a naval base near Peru will be left there as long as possible. Should the base be reactivated the circus equipment might be moved to Kokomo, Ind. where the circus' parent organization owns property. A final note said the show had

purchased two lions for Terrell Jacobs' Act.

Johnny Herriott remembers that during the fall or early winter in Peru one day the steam calliope pulled by an 8 horse hitch handled by Tex Montgomery and himself went to downtown Peru and gave a concert. He says that while the show was at the Peru quarters Frank Orman was in the immediate charge of all operations with Horstman as his supervisor, representing Mr. Wirtz.

The 1950 circus year had finally come to an end. It had not been a happy one for circus fans. The year's circus casualties had been many. Especially bad news was that the Dailey Bros. Railroad Show was finished, at least as a railroad outfit. In late November most of the Dailey cars were sold to the Hyman Michaels Co. for scrap. Also there were rumors, soon to be made fact, that Ringling-Barnum would be reduced from 80 cars to 70 in 1951. The future of Cole Bros. was much in doubt, especially as a travelling circus. Jack Tavlin's plans to lease part of the show for a canvas tour next summer were to fall through, although at present nothing definite had been released to the public. Tavlin in time would go to New York and begin a profitable career in the outdoor advertising business. Johnny Herriott says that it appeared to all of them at Peru that Mr. Wirtz planned to stay in the circus business, at least in some form. He had authorized his father to purchase horses and they were training and rehearsing the acts. With this kind of actions plus the money being spent to upgrade the Peru quarters every indication from the Wirtz organization was that the Cole show was here to stay. What direction the show would take in 1951 and the future only time would tell.

As a personal footnote to conclude this article the author well remembers as am sure do other fans at the time we knew in our hearts that our beloved



Photo No. 30 - Storage barn at the New Cole Bros. quarters, Terrell Jacobs farm, Peru, Ind., October 1950. Pfeining Collection.

Cole Bros. Circus was finished. Oh, it would make an indoor date at the Chicago Stadium next spring, no doubt, but never again would the Cole white tops be seen. During the 16 seasons, 1935-50, the show had endeared itself to the organized fans like no other circus in modern memory. The winter of 1950-51 was not remembered with fondness by the circus fan. It was one of sadness and melancholy.

Postnote. This series will be concluded with one final installment covering the events of 1951 and subsequent years, the disposition of the Cole Bros. title and properties. At that time we hope to include details on the fate of the Ojus quarters. Presently, that story has not been clarified. Some are of the opinion the Wirtz group bought the quarters along with the Cole property. Others say no.

**Official Route
Cole Bros. Circus
Season of 1950**

April 21 - May 7	Chicago, Ill. (Stadium)	Indoors
May 10 - 21	Detroit, Mich. (Olympia)	Indoors
May 23 - 25	Columbus, Ohio (Red Bird Ball Park)	Outdoors
May 26 - 30	Cincinnati, Ohio (Garden)	Indoors

June 2 - 3	Cleveland, Ohio (Municipal Stadium)	Outdoors
June 4	Akron, Oh. (Rubber Bowl)	Outdoors
(no show June 5)		
June 6	Erie, Pa.	Outdoors
(no show June 7-8)		
June 9 - 10	Buffalo, N.Y. (Civic Stadium)	Outdoors
(no show June 11-13)		
June 14 - 17	Pittsburgh, Pa. (Forbes Field)	Outdoors
(no show June 18-20)		
June 21 - 25	New York, N.Y. (Yankee Stadium)	Outdoors
(no show June 26-29)		
June 30 - July 4	Brooklyn, N.Y. (Ebbets Field)	Outdoors

Under Canvas Stands

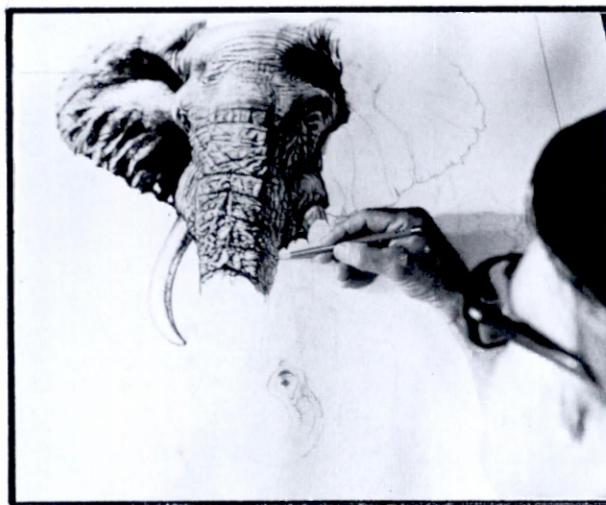
July 5 - 6	Jersey City, N.J.
July 7 - 8	Patterson, N.J.
July 9 - 10	Newark, N.J.
July 11	(Wilmington, Del. — booked but did not play)
July 12 - 13	Baltimore, Md.
July 14 - 16	Washington, D.C.
July 17 - 22	Philadelphia, Pa.
July 23	Plainfield, N.J.
July 24	Easton, Pa.
July 25	Poughkeepsie, N.Y.
July 26	Albany, N.Y.
July 27	Schenectady, N.Y.
July 28	Utica, N.Y.
July 29	Syracuse, N.Y.
July 30	Sunday, No Show
July 31	Rochester, N.Y.
Aug. 1	Hornell, N.Y.
Aug. 2	Binghampton, N.Y.
Aug. 3	Scranton, Pa.
Aug. 4	Hazleton, Pa.
Aug. 5	Bloomsburg, Pa. (Show closed here)

"HOLD YOUR HORSES THE ELEPHANTS ARE COMING!"

"This is my most ambitious art endeavor to date! A full size 36" x 26" — in great detail — pencil etching of 3 African elephants in the brush in Africa. This study of these last great creatures should be released in mid July or August of 1981." Jerry Booker, Show Ring Corp., Suite 116, 1670 S. Amphlett Blvd., San Mateo, Cal. 94402

If you like elephants you'll want this. Now own your own elephant before these magnificent giants disappear! This limited edition of hand signed and numbered prints are already in great demand—so order now to insure your print. This huge life-like detail print, requiring extra special production techniques, will be priced at \$20.00 each.

This photo of the artist working on the full detail drawing is shown underway after about 125 hours.



RUSSELL BROS. CIRCUS

1934 and 1935 Seasons

By James H. Webb, Jr.

1934 SEASON

The following summary of the history of Russell Brothers Circus during 1934 is based on my memory and notes that I jotted down at the time, supplemented by a re-reading of articles published in *The Billboard*.

Russell Brothers Circus was owned by my uncle, Claude W. Webb, and his wife Pauline. The title derived from Pauline's maiden name, which was Russell. The pair had started five years before with modest beginnings and grown year by year until their show was one of the two or three largest motorized circuses of the 1930's. Working frequently with newspaper tie-ins, the show had weathered the early years of the Great Depression with remarkable success. The 1933 season was an especially successful year. At the end of that season Claude and Pauline bought property at Rolla, Missouri consisting of 75 acres, a large residence, a stone barn easily heated for the animals, and other outbuildings.

I left a job on *The New York Times* to join Claude and Pauline in April, 1934, a few days before the season's opening at the Rolla fairgrounds on Saturday, April 21.

The performance at the beginning of the season was as follows: *RUSSELL BROTHERS CIRCUS PERFORMANCE AT THE BEGINNING OF 1934*

Grand entry

Illuminated swinging ladder: Peggy Leonard, Frances (Mrs. Bob) Fisher, Caroline (Hodgini) LaVenia.

Rings 1 and 3: pony drill, Frank Miller and Jewell Jackson.

Comedy acrobatics by three members of the Avalon troupe.

Rings 1 and 3: Contortions by Bert Dearo and Dad Whitlark.

Center ring: trained dogs.

Iron jaw: Gladys Eckhart, Pearl Harris, Peggy Leonard.

Single elephant (Rubber) in center ring.

Rings 1 and 3: Single trapeze, Claude Fondau and Bert Dearo.

Center ring: Contortion rings by 79-year-old Dad Whitlark, especially announced as a Ripley's "Believe-it-or-not" feature.

Single trapeze over all three rings: Gladys Eckhart, Caroline Hodgini (muscle grind), and Pearl Harris.

The seven Romanoffs (the Avalons on teeter-board).

Pauline Webb's leaping greyhounds on Hippodrome track, climaxed by jump through hoop of fire.

Ring 1: the Great Dalbeanie, unsupported ladder on pedestal.

Center ring: Bert Dearo, slack wire.

Rings 1 and 3: Liberty horses: Frank Miller and Jewell Jackson.

Modoc elephant (Rubber) in eccentric makeup, marching unattended around the Hippodrome track.

Athleta (Kathryn Brooks): hock, heel, and toe catches on swinging trapeze, including forward throwout to heels.

Webb's four military elephants (Margaret, Sadie, Rubber, and Elsie), worked by George French.

Menage: horses trained by Frank Miller, ridden by Miller, Hermine LaVenia, Peggy Leonard, and Jewell Jackson.

The six Avalons, tightwire.

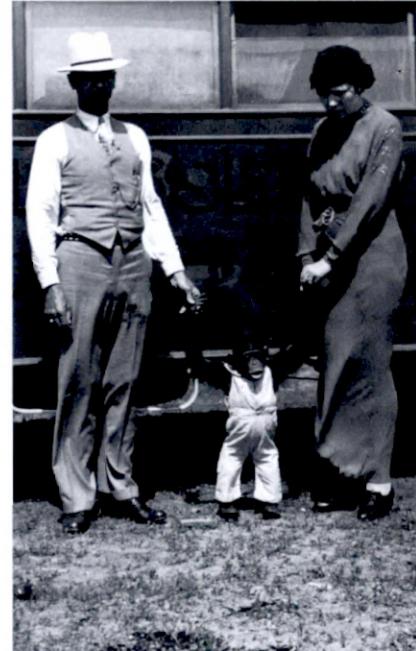
Riding dogs on ponies, worked by Frank Miller and Frank Sanders.

Rings 1 and 3: Double trapeze: LaVenia Sisters and the Aerial Fondaus.

Center ring feature: The Great Dalbeanie and his wagon wheel. Standing on wheel hubs, he jumped up steps to a high pedestal, and then to a table and on to the ground.

Clowns: Fred and Doodles DeMar.

Russell Bros. Circus on the lot in Oneonta, New York, June 20, 1934. Author's collection.



Claude and Pauline Webb, owners of Russell Bros. Circus, with their pet chimp "Topsy." Author's collection.

Lawrence Cross, Jack Crippen, Johnny Delmar (they provided many walkarounds during the course of the performance).

Closing number: Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers; with rigging erected lengthwise in the tent. Featured were 2½ somersault by Wayne Larey and a double by Bob Fisher blindfolded.

Note: the performance was beefed up later in the season by the addition of the Riding Rooneys and the Perez trio, performing the "Jackley drop".

The band was directed by L. Claude Myers, who also played the cornet.

Other members were Fred Dupile, Charles Cook, and Jimmie Hurtt, cornets; Frank M. Stephens, baritone; Rudolph Anderson, trombone, Nick Rowland, drums.

The concert or after-show, priced at five cents, consisted of pony rides in the big top.

Big show prices were 35 cents for adults, 15 cents for children under 12, with front reserves going for 25 cents. General admission tickets were reduced in newspaper tie-ups.

The side show line-up was as follows: G.W. "Doc" Hamilton, manger; Ray N. Speer and Frank A. Golden, lecturers; Harry Williams and





Bob Fisher and his Fearless Flyers were long time features of the Russell show. The act used an outdoor rigging supported by pipe, as opposed to being rigged from the big top. The rigging was placed lengthwise next to the center ring that was offset to make room. Left to right Maxine Fisher, leaper; Wayne Larey, leaper; Frances Fisher, catcher; Bob Fisher, leaper and Benny Gibson, catcher. Author's collection.

Jack St. Clair, tickets; Earl Wotz, air calliope at entrance; Sailor Wiggins, front door; John Baker, canvas boss; pygmy village; Johnny Walker and Joe Porter; Topsy, trained chimpanzee; Prince Omar, sword swallower; Frank Golden, magic and Punch; C. Tosh and W. Redway, Hawaiian guitar specialties; Madam Loray (Mrs. Ray Speer), mentalist; Princess Louise (Mrs. G.W. Hamilton), Buddha; Chief Jo-Joby, double-faced pygmy; Central American sloths, and a selection of caged animals.

The staff was headed by Claude and Pauline Webb, co-managers. Claude's emphasis was on equipment and movement, while Pauline's main interest leaned toward such things as wardrobe and performance (although Claude took a special interest in the horse acts). The overall effort, however, was essentially a combined one, and all important decisions were the product of their joint thinking.

Ray Swan was in charge of the office at the beginning of the season. I. as auditor, was his assistant. Other key members were: R.M. Harvey, general agent; G.W. ("Doc") Hamilton, legal adjuster and side show manager; Frank LaMarr, equestrian director; Dan White, lot superintendent; Bob O'Hara, assisted by Les Hutchinson, banners and reserved seats; Ernie A. Peterson, transportation superintendent; and W.H. ("Mac") McDaniel, steward. Harry Doran and Glen Booth had the concessions.

Ahead of the show, in addition to general agent Harvey, were Al Oake, contracting agent, and Jack Osher, who headed the bill-posting brigade.

The show opened with the canvas that had served through the previous season; big top was a 100-foot round



This four wheeled trailer ticket-office wagon had been on the show for a couple of years. This photo was taken in 1934 the last year it was used. Al Conover collection.

top with three 40-foot middles and 10-foot sidewall; menagerie, 70 with three 30's; side-show, 50 with three 20's; cookhouse, 30x50. Rolling stock included 22 company-owned trucks with semi-trailers, two busses, and four-wheel trailers for office wagon and cages. Privately-owned vehicles included 32 cars, trucks, housecars and trailers.

The 1934 season opened on Saturday, April 21 at the Fair Grounds of Rolla, Missouri, new winter quarters. The day was cold but clear, and business was fair. The next day the show moved 178 miles to Cape Girardeau for a Monday showing. Business there was weak in the afternoon but excellent at night. Sikeston, on Tuesday, gave poor business in cold weather.

Three Illinois stands followed. Cairo, on Wednesday the 25th, was good, but business fell badly at Harrisburg and Mt. Carmel on Thursday and Friday, respectively, due mainly to day-and-date competition with the Tom Mix Circus. Heavy rain at Harrisburg complicated matters further.

Washington, Indiana was another loser, but things picked up at New Albany on Monday, providing at least a fairly good night's business following a weak matinee. Boys at the New Albany night show swarmed the lot at all points, creating a nuisance but doing no real harm. Poor matinees and fairly good night houses continued at Bedford and Bloomington; and Shelbyville, on May 3rd, came up with a good matinee and an excellent night house. Connorsville brought back the poor matinee-fair night pattern, but Greensburg produced a real nosedive. Anderson, on Monday the 6th brought two excellent houses, and Indiana finished with fair to good business at Newcastle and Muncie.

At Muncie Ray Swan, in charge of the office up to that time, and Ray Blankenship, front door superintendent, exchanged jobs.

Business at nine Ohio stands was fair on the average, with some low spots and some good ones. On Monday, May 21, Oil City, Pennsylvania produced a packed house at night following a weak matinee. Eight

stands in New York State, beginning at Jamestown and ending at Saratoga Springs, brought only fair business. A highlight was a free performance staged inside Auburn prison on Sunday, May 27. The inmates were grateful.

The New York tour ended on an unpleasant note. Following the Saratoga Springs night show a windstorm blew up. Claude, concerned about the safety of the canvas, gave some sharp orders to lot superintendent Dan White, who had been drinking. A fistfight followed; Dan was knocked down and, subsequently, paid off. The incident might have ended there if two canvasmen had not spoken out in Dan's defense. Spotted as "agitators," they were beaten up and paid off the following morning. They appealed to the law and, as a result, five members of the staff (Claude and Pauline, Bob O'Hara, Ray Blankenship, and myself, none of whom had struck a single blow) were detained at Troy, New York until an out-of-court settlement could be made two days later.

Dan White's departure led to one of the greatest things that ever happened to any circus. His successor was George Werner, one of the outstanding lot superintendents of all time. George remained with Russell Brothers Circus for the rest of its existence. Subsequently he served on the Ringling-Barnum show, and he spent his last years with Clyde Beatty-Cole Brothers.

A 12-stand tour of New England began with fair business at Greenfield and Gardner, Massachusetts, above-average take at five Vermont stands, and three good Massachusetts dates followed by a bad day, in terms of both business and weather (heavy rain), at Leominster.

We returned to New York State for 13 stands ranging through the center, northward to Ogdensburg on the banks of the St. Lawrence river, and westward to the shores of Lakes On-

tario and Erie. Business was fair to good, with a few low spots. The last New York stand was at Dunkirk where on Sunday, July 1 a new big top was raised. It was a 110-foot round top with three 50-foot middles.

Business in Pennsylvania, with 22 stands, nosedived. Only one town, Clearfield, produced a really good day's business; the rest ranged from very poor to fair. The route began at Erie, went southward to mid-state and then eastward to a concentration of dates in the eastern part of the state.

Approaching Butler on July 7, Claude Webb threw us a real scare. As he and Pauline were proceeding along the road with their car and house-trailer, they saw the truck-semi trailer that carried three of the elephants parked on the side of the road. The driver was dozing. Claude, turning the car and trailer over to Pauline, took over the wheel of the bull truck to relieve the drowsy driver. As he began the descent of a steep mountain road he shifted to a lower gear to control the increasing speed. The gear stripped, and so did the others, one by one. The truck gained momentum until it was completely out of control. The brakes were useless, and Claude and the elephants were left to the fates. The fates, fortunately, were kind. He did not meet any other vehicles during the wild ride, and the truck slowed to a halt when it came to an upgrade.

Other highlights of the Pennsylvania tour included a visit to the show by Tom Mix's mother at DuBois on July 11, and the arrival of the Riding Rooneys to join the cast on the 16th.

Bob Fisher and his Fearless Flyers left, by agreement, to fill summer fair commitments. They were replaced by the Flying LaVans, consisting of Pop



Electrical department's generator semi-trailer on Russell Bros. in 1934. Al Conover collection.

LaVan, catcher, and four younger men.

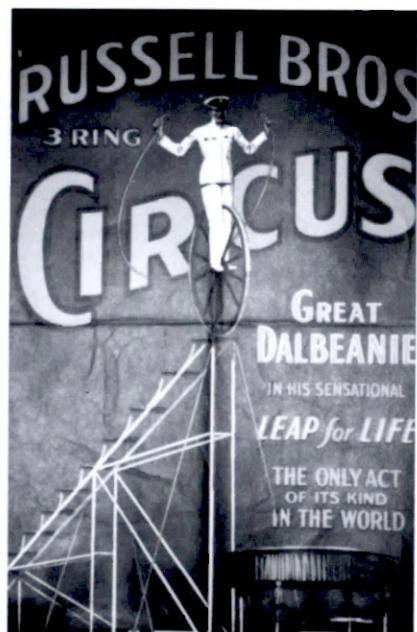
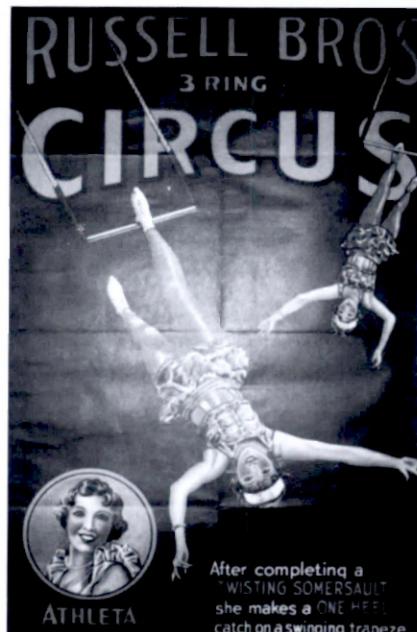
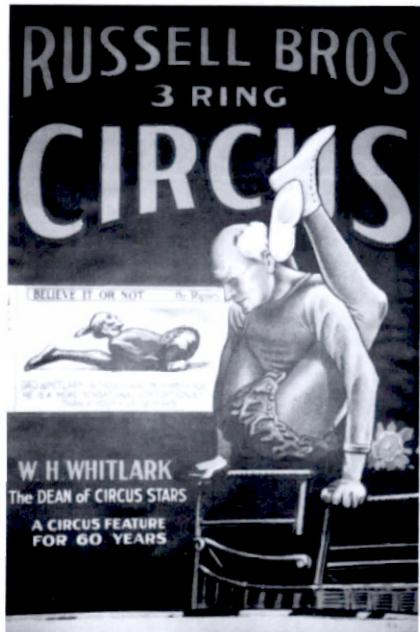
The next week began at Cumberland, Maryland, followed by a dip into Virginia at Winchester, both towns producing fair business, and a return to Maryland at Hagerstown for a nosedive. Frederick, on August 2, was better. On Friday August 3rd a tour of five Virginia cities began at Alexandria. Business was fair over and above a flood of passes provided for two of Claude's brothers, Martin and Henry

Claude Webb contracted with the Donaldson Lithograph Co., of Cincinnati, Ohio, for a number of specially designed posters for the 1934 season. W.H. Whitlark, Athleta and The Great Dalbeanie were acts featured with special paper. These are all full color lithographs and are most colorful and attractive. Pfening collection.

(my father) and their families, and many friends with whom I had grown up in neighboring Arlington.

Saturday at Fredericksburg was fair. The Avalon troupe of wirewalkers and teeterboard artists left the show there, by previous agreement, and was replaced by the Knight family performing the same acts. A 124-mile Sunday move over the Blue Ridge mountains took the show to Staunton, in the Shenandoah valley. Business there and at the last three Virginia stands was good.

Fourteen towns in North Carolina brought mostly fair-to-good business with a number of disappointing exceptions caused in some instances by heavy rains. At Greensboro on August 21 the four elephants were rented by a local furniture store to demonstrate the amazing strength of Simmons mattresses. August 26 brought a return to Virginia at Petersburg, which produced a good matinee and a straw night





Four wheel cage pulled by a bus on Russell in 1934. The show had a number of these cages. Al Conover collection.

house, followed by a two-day stand at Richmond with a fairly healthy take. Newport News was good but Portsmouth, the last Virginia stand, was weak. Poor business in eastern North Carolina climaxed with a rained-out matinee at New Bern on September 7. The night house was good, however, as were both shows at Wilmington, the last stand in the state. The week of September 10-15 in South Carolina was consistently poor except for Columbia on the 12th, which came up with a fair matinee and a straw night house.

The September 15, 1934 *Billboard* carried an advertisement headed: FOR SALE, RUSSELL BROTHERS CIRCUS. A similar ad had appeared a year before, in the October 7, 1933 issue. The 1934 ad labeled the show "one of the largest and best equipped motorized circuses on the road," which was literally true. Canvas and rolling stock were described; also horses, ponies, and trappings, caged animals, camels, and "four young, gentle, female elephants any child can handle." Winter quarters were also for sale. Everything was available when the ad was published or at the close of the season. The reason for selling was a desire to get out of the show business. "If you do not mean business," said the ad, "and are not interested enough to come or send a representative to see the show in operation, no need to take up time corresponding."

Again, as a year before, no one with the necessary cash meant business.

Twelve Georgia stands were spotty, producing business from very poor at Carrollton to a turnaway at Augusta and a full house at Athens. A *Billboard* article on September 29 commented on the Augusta stand, reporting the excellent business and quoting from highly favorable after-notices in the city's two daily newspapers. Opposition by Downie Brothers Circus at Albany, Moultrie, Valdosta, and Thomasville hurt badly.

Pop LaVan and his flying act left the show on September 18, and were



Cookhouse semi-trailer on Russell Bros. Circus in 1934. Al Conover collection.

replaced by the return of Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers from their fair engagements a week later.

There had been one Alabama date, Anniston on September 22, sandwiched into the Georgia stretch, but the real Alabama tour began at Dothan on October 2 and ended at Jasper 15 days later. It was to a large extent one big mudbath. At Opelika on the 5th, although the canvas was up and ready notwithstanding the torrential rains, practically no one showed up and both shows were cancelled. Alexander City, scheduled for the following day, was cancelled due to impassable roads. The matinee at Huntsville on October 10 was cancelled also, but for another reason: the prop truck left the road and tumbled down a hill. No one was hurt. Even without those unfavorable factors, however, Alabama business ranged only from poor to fair, with a few good houses but no outstanding ones. Poor attendance at a two-day Birmingham stand, October 15 and 16, was caused at least in part by the billing of the oncoming Hagenback-Wallace show.

With the hot breath of Hagenback-Wallace continuing to breath down its neck, Russell Brothers played nine towns in Mississippi with mostly negative results relieved only by very good business at Clarksdale and Greenville. By that time it had become evident that to continue in the face of almost certain defeat would only serve to threaten the show's reserve needed to prepare for a new season. The final two weeks of the schedule, consisting of 12 additional dates in Mississippi, were cancelled and the season closed at Brookhaven on October 27.

The 1934 tour was climaxed romantically by the marriage of Bert Dearo and Corinne Hodgini in the center ring following the night show. Two days later about 20 members of the Russell Brothers personnel, including myself, visited the Hagenback-Wallace circus at Jackson.

A brief item in the November 17 *Billboard* reported that the year had been a very profitable one for Russell Brothers Circus. That was an overstatement. There were some high

spots, but the season record was not far above the break-even point.

1935 SEASON

An article in the February 9, 1935 issue of *The Billboard* reported that preparations for the Russell Brothers season were well along. Specifics included work-in-progress on a new office wagon being built by the Springfield Wagon & Trailer Company, the addition of a new truck for the advance, and the planned inauguration of a new cookhouse tent. The names of individuals and troupes signed up for the performance, the band, and the advance were listed. An advertisement in the same issue called for more performers, technicians, advance men (press and brigade agents and billers), and a side show manager. As an inducement, it was stated that "our cookhouse is the best."

Another *Billboard* article the following week, a third on March 2, and a fourth on March 30, gave further details on recruitment and mentioned that the Donaldson Lithographing Company was busy printing Russell Brothers paper.

Recent visitors to winter quarters, according to the March 30 article, included William Lindemann, one of the brothers who owned the Seils-Sterling Circus; and J. C. Admire, that show's general agent.

One romantic tidbit that none of the articles reported was that steward "Mac" McDaniel and wardrobe mistress Margaret Thompson (a former trainer of big cats on the Al G. Barnes show) cooked up a relationship during the pre-season days that resulted in a wedding just before opening day.

The season opened to good business on April 12 in the home town, Rolla, Missouri. After two additional Missouri dates, Salem and Cape Girardeau, and two in Illinois, Cairo and Harrisburg, the circus played seven Indiana spots including three days on two lots in Indianapolis. Ohio came next with six stands, then West Virginia with three, and Ohio with 13 more. Back into Indiana it was for five

dates; then to Illinois for 14 broken only by a stand at Clinton, Iowa on June 6.

My detailed notes on the 1935 season begin on June 3 at Peru, Illinois. For the first weeks I jotted down only that the spring was so wet that farmers were delayed in planting. This circumstance, keeping them on the farm to catch up when they might have been taking their families to the circus, was hurting business badly. Matinees suffered mostly but not exclusively, since the desperate farmers were working into the night, with headlights on their tractors.

During the first three or four cold, sloppy weeks, the show hardly made expenses once. Movement on and off one muddy lot after another was rough on equipment and dispositions.

My only note concerning competition during the early weeks refers to a stand by Downie Brothers at Ashland, Kentucky, six miles from Ironton, Ohio, where Russell Brothers showed on May 4.

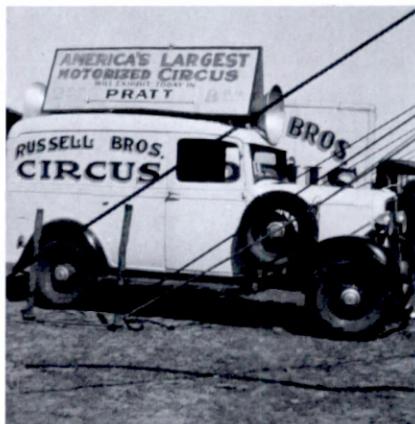
A two-column story in *The Billboard* on May 11, written by staff members who had visited the show at Hamilton, Ohio on April 29, included a wrap-up of the season's first 17 days, gave a detailed report of the big show programs, and identified all key personnel.

"The Russell show is among the largest motorized organizations, and its equipment is among the best," said the article. There were 76 cars and trailers, most of them owned by the management. There was no parade. Big top canvas, held over from 1934, was a 110-foot round top with three 50-foot middles; menagerie, 70 with three 30's; cookhouse (new), 30 x 65; pit show, 20 x 30. Size of the side show top, new that season, was not stated. Seating capacity of the big top was given as 4,000.

The performance," said the May 11 article, "is one of the best with a truck show. It is well balanced, moves along under Fred Ledgett's direction, and Claude Myers' band adds materially to the performance."

Business at 25 stands in Illinois and Iowa from May 30 to June 27, inclusive, ranged from fair to good. At Sterling, Illinois, on June 5, we were visited by circus writer-historian Earl Chapin May. On a soggy lot at Clinton, Iowa the following day, we played to a straw matinee. A group of men from newspapers in Muscatine, Iowa, which were considering sponsorship of the show for a stand there on June 20, visited at the Clinton matinee for a personal look before a final decision was reached. They were favorably impressed by both the show and the cookhouse fare. Another dinner guest was Kate Smith, a dog trainer well known in the show world at that time.

A two-day stand (June 7 and 8) at



This Chevy panel truck was equipped with a sound system and was used as a downtown bally. The author sometimes drove this truck. This is a 1935 photo. Pfening collection.

Rockford, Illinois started with a light matinee, which was disappointing because newspaper coverage had been lavish, including in addition to the show's releases a number of special articles by Earl Chapin May. Our concern subsided when the night show pulled a near-capacity house. Business on the second day was good.

The season's first Sunday date was at Aurora, Illinois on June 9, where Jack Smith and his "Funny Ford" joined the show. Business, good at the matinee, fell to near zero at night. We broke about even for the day.

A telegram signed by four billposters up ahead set forth grievances over their working con-

The Great Dalbeanie jumped his wagon wheel up a flight of steps and over to a mattress on a table. He was on the Russell show for a number of years. Author's collection.



ditions and included their resignation. I telephoned Francis Kitzman, brigade chief, who said there was no cause for concern. The men were troublemakers and good riddance, and he had enough good men to carry on until he could rebuild his force.

Pontiac, Illinois produced a poor day's business on June 10 and Bloomington a not much better one the following day notwithstanding top advance press coverage because of our feature attraction, Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers. Bloomington, traditional home of flying trapeze acts, was Bob's home town and base of operations. A visitor of the day was Art Concello's brother.

Business at Pekin, Illinois on June 11 continued bad. It was becoming painfully evident by this time that the big top was going to pieces fast. It had to be patched practically every day before it was hoisted. Since it was less than a year old (it was inaugurated on July 1, 1934 at Dunkirk, New York), and a big top should last two seasons, Claude had registered a complaint with Baker-Lockwood, the manufacturers. They had indicated they would consider an adjustment.

Business at Macomb, Quincy, and Beardstown, Illinois was among the season's worst up to that time. Lee Sullivan, owner of the Eli Bridge Company, which made most of our semi-trailers, visited at Beardstown.

By this time the big show performance, which had pretty well shaken down following a few early-season changes, was running as follows:

GRAND ENTRY: led by Corine Dearo riding prize horse Ted.

SWINGING LADDERS: Irene Ledgett in center ring; Gracie Sykes and Frances (Mrs. Bob) Fisher in rings 1 and 3, respectively.

BUCKING MULES: comic number worked by Irv Romig in ring 1 and a groom in ring 3.

PONY DRILL: six black shetlands in ring 1 and four spotted shetlands in ring 3, worked by Frank Miller and Hazel King, respectively.

LEAPING GREYHOUNDS: Owned and worked by Pauline Webb.

CONTORTIONS AND BALANCING LADDER: In ring 1, Bert Dearo in frog costume; in ring 3, the Great Dalbeanie on an unsupported ladder. In center ring, contortion act by 11-year-old Fay Romig.

FOOT & IRON JAW SLIDES: Al Connors climbing wire from ground to top of a centerpole and sliding backwards to the ground. His wife Bertha, announced as the dainty Violetta, sliding down a long cable hanging from her teeth.

TOREADOR CLOWN NUMBER: Burlesque in center ring by producing clown Harry LaPearl and Company.

PRINCIPAL RIDING ACT: Elizabeth Rooney (Mrs. Carl Romig)

riding bareback, shifting to a fast horse for spectacular finale. Two breaks in this act were filled by Harry LaPearl's clown gags.

HEAD BALANCING: Ernie ("Upside Down") White spinning on his head on revolving trapeze bar. Single traps in rings 1 and 3 by Corinne Dearo and Gracie Sykes, respectively.

ELEPHANT ACT: Irene Ledgett, flashily and immaculately costumed, putting Margaret, Sadie, and Elsie through a snappy routine. Assisted by Elvin Welsh. Fourth elephant. Rubber, joined for mount on hippodrome track.

CLOWN BAND: Seven clowns, headed by Harry LaPearl, on platform near center ring.

WIREWALKERS: Ring 1: Bert Dearo on slackwire. Ring 3: Elizabeth Rooney on tightwire. Center ring: Connors trio (Al, Bertha, son Jimmy), ending with backward somersault on the wire by Al.

CLOWN BABY: Loretta (Mrs. Harry) LaPearl, and dwarf dressed as baby.

LIBERTY HORSES: Ring 1: Frank Miller with Prince, a fine-looking pinto stallion. Ring 3: Hazel King with all-white gelding Snow. Center ring: Carl Romig and Gracie Sykes with Romig's two trick horses.

CONCERT ANNOUNCEMENT: Fred Ledgett announces aftershow (dogs, monkeys, and chimpanzee Topsy). Concert price was five cents.

CLOWN ACROBATS: Ring 1: Harry and Loretta LaPearl and dwarf. Ring 3: Gracie Sykes, Irvin and Fay Romig. Center Ring: the Connors Trio.

SINGLE ELEPHANT: Rubber, unassisted and unaccompanied by trainer, dancing around the track playing a harmonica held in her trunk.

THE GREAT DALBEANIE: The 50-year-old Australian, dressed in army officer's uniform with bright red cap and tunic, mounted a step-by-step climb up a ten-foot staircase on the wheel while gripping the rim, a leap from the top to a table, and another to the ground.

FUNNY FORD: Jack Smith's ancient T-Model, with the axle moved forward to allow the vehicle to rear up like a horse.

MENAGE ACT: Frank Miller on Ted, Fred Ledgett on Black Devil, Irene Ledgett on Golden Nugget, Hazel King on Gray Eagle, Gracie Sykes on Rex.

PERCH ACT: Ernie White balancing a 30-pole while his wife Ida climbed to the top and did tricks.

CLOWN SNAKE DANCE: Burlesque of an oriental snake dance by the LaPearl troupe.

TRAPS AND CLOUD SWING: Bert Dearo in center ring, doing contortions on high swinging trapeze. In the end rings, Corinne Dearo and Elizabeth Rooney did cloud swings.

CLOWN WALKAROUND.

FLYING ACT: The Fearless Flyers,



This newspaper ad was used by the Russell show for the Green Bay, Wisc. stand on July 6, 1935. Kasiska collection.

including Bob Fisher, Eldon Day, and Maxine Fisher (Bob's daughter), leapers; and Frances (Mrs. Bob) Fisher and Benny Gibson, catchers. Climax was a double somersault by Bob while blindfolded.

It is worth noting that the then 19-year-old Gracie Sykes, adopted daughter of Elizabeth and Carl Romig, is now Gracie McIntosh and the owner of the M & M Circus.

The staff was as follows: Claude and Pauline Webb, proprietors; R. M. Harvey, general agent; Harry W. Seymour, legal adjuster; E. C. Richards, assistant manager; Ray Blankenship, treasurer, James Webb, secretary and auditor; Joe C. Webb, public relations; E. A. Peterson, transportation superintendent; Fred Ledgett, equestrian director; W. H. McDaniel, steward; L. Claude Myers, musical director; and George Werner, lot superintendent. J. H. ("Doc") Oyler had the side show, and the concessions were run by Harry Doran and Glen Booth. Bob O'Hara had banners and reserved seat sales, and Elvin Welsh was menagerie superintendent. On the advance, Herman Q. Smith was contracting agent and Francis Kitzman was brigade agent.

The show's total personnel included approximately 225, plus 12 on the advance. The daily expense was approximately \$1,000.

Four Iowa stands were played in cold, wet weather from June 17 to 20.

Only one, Iowa City, paid off. Laboring help was becoming increasingly scarce, and the white-collar employees were drafted to help load seat planks and saturated canvas.

At Galesburg, Illinois on June 21 a furious hailstorm during the nearly packed matinee tore two large holes in the big top. There was a stampede for the exits, but by a rare stroke of good fortune, the only casualty was a broken leg suffered by a woman who was knocked down in the rush. Most spectators hung around, and returned to their seats when the storm was over.

Pauline Webb, following unsatisfactory experiences with a series of grease joint operators, took over the management herself at Galesburg. The joint was operated as a separate concession, not included in the general arrangement with Glen Booth and Harry Doran.

Margaret Thompson McDaniel, bride of steward "Mac," left the show on June 23 due to a siege of bad health from which she had been suffering for some time.

Ft. Madison, Iowa produced a good day's business on June 24, and a visit by Mr. Mellor of the Baker-Lockwood Tent and Awning Company. A new big top was ordered.

A dinner guest at Moline, Illinois on June 25 was Al Oake, contracting agent for the Tom Mix Circus.

Dubuque, Iowa came up with the biggest day's business in the history of Russell Brothers Circus up to that day. About 4,800 were packed into the big top at the matinee, and almost that many at night. The West Brothers Carnival shared the lot with us.

Circus writer Earl Chapin May visited the show again at Freeport, Illinois on June 27.

Sixteen stands in Wisconsin beginning at Janesville on Friday June 28 brought mostly dismal business, with exceptions at Stevens Point on July 4, New London 7, Racine 10, and Beloit 12. Sverre Braathen, a Madison lawyer and one of the country's most active and cooperative circus fans, invited all of the show's executive staff and performers to his summer home, called "The White Tops," for an afternoon of beer and merrymaking on Sunday, June 30.

Jack Beach, our frozen custard man, was surprised and distressed to learn that he was not allowed to operate in Wisconsin due to strict laws passed to protect the state's dairy industry.

From the advance, working in Minnesota, came news that Shell Brothers Circus was billing our contracted territory. All-out warfare was declared, with instructions from Claude Webb to Francis Kitzman to plaster the country with bills, including plenty of "wait paper."

Bill and Edna Antes made the first of several visits to the show at Oshkosh,



Wisconsin on July 3. Living at Evansville, where Bill edited a weekly newspaper, they had not yet entered show business. (They joined Russell Brothers the following year, thus starting a career that took them into key positions in the circus world during most of the next half-century.)

Enroute to New London on July 7, a truck with a built-on cage containing two leopards turned over when the driver dozed. There was no serious damage.

Business at Sheboygan on the eighth was bad, but the day was spiced up by fan dancer Sally Rand, who spent the afternoon on the lot and posed for snapshots in bareback riding wardrobe. She impressed everyone with her natural, unassuming manner.

The excitement at night was of another kind, centering around trouble among George Werner's big top crew and ending up with the pay-off of 25 husky laborers. The resulting manpower shortage made it necessary for every able-bodied man on the show to pitch in and help with the night's loading. As the situation continued, offers to the unemployed, including residents of hobo jungles, were refused, or accepted for only long enough to pack a few good meals away. The Minnesota farmers were also complaining of the scarcity of labor. Pauline Webb, disgusted, sent a telegram to President Franklin D. Roosevelt asking why there should be such a labor shortage while so many people continued to be unemployed.

A truck from Baker-Lockwood awaited the show's arrival at Boscobel, Wisconsin on Sunday, July 14. It had brought the new big top, which was the same size (110-foot round top with three 50-foot middles) as its now badly beaten-up predecessor. It was inaugurated on a dirty, sandy lot, with more dust than the water wagon could handle.

On July 16 our caravan crossed the Mississippi River for the 10th time

The full midway of the 1935 Russell show is pictured in Stevens Point, Wisc. on July 4, 1935. Author's collection.

during the season, to begin an 11-day Minnesota tour at Winona. Seven of the days produced good business. Both Shell Brothers Circus and the Atterbury Circus preceded us at Red Wing and Rochester.

Business at four of five South Dakota stands was from fair to good. Iowa with eight stands, including a three-day stop at Des Moines, was mostly negative. Boone, Marshallton, and Council Bluffs, however, were good stands notwithstanding heavy Cole Brothers billing at Council Bluffs. The highlight of the Iowa tour, in view of the continuing labor shortage, was the delivery of a mechanical stake-driver at Sioux City.

At Boone, Iowa on August 5, George Werner was paid in full and told to go home for a good rest and return when he felt like working again. It had become more evident each day that he had been under heavy nervous tension. Claude and Pauline, convinced that they had one of the best men in the business, decided wisely to help him with his problems to whatever extent they could, and decreed a period of rest. After George had left it was revealed that his brother had been stabbed to death a week or two previously. That plus the continuing labor shortage had weighed heavily on his nerves. The gap was partially filled by signing up Bill Warner as boss canvassman six days after George's departure.

Two Nebraska stands, Nebraska City and Falls City, produced fair matinees and poor night houses. Many of Claude Webb's old friends, dating from the years when he had worked as a farm hand in Iowa, just across the river, visited at Nebraska City on August 13.

During August the program underwent a number of changes. On the third, Jack Smith and his Funny Ford

left and Johnny Silvy's troupe joined, providing a three-man act on the flying rings and a five-man comedy acrobatic act. Two days later the Conners trio left to make fair dates, and Captain Harry Greenwood joined with his trained seal act. On October 13 the Hodginis joined. This group consisted of Caroline Hodginis, her brothers Ted and Joe, and her brand-new husband, Lou Deno. The men did clowning and comedy acrobatics, and Caroline's specialty was the muscle grind.

A troupe of acrobats, the seven DeCarlos, joined on July 15. They left the same day, following the night show. Accustomed to the vaudeville circuit, they decided after a day's sampling that outdoor troupers was not for them.

Bob Fisher, coming to the rescue of an usher being beaten up by four other ushers at Nebraska City, cut his hand on a set of teeth. Infection set in, with the result that Bob could not work for the rest of the season. Eldon Day and Bob's daughter, Maxine, did the leap-ing.

George Werner returned, well rested, at Falls City, Nebraska on August 14. Also present at that town were billposters for Cole Brothers Circus, waiting impatiently for us to leave so that they could spread the news about their show, which was scheduled to follow us. They repeated at St. Joseph, Missouri the next day.

We began an 11-city tour of eastern

Sally Rand, center visited the Russell show in Sheboygan, Wisc. on July 8, 1935. She is shown here with Irene Ledgett on the left and Irene O'Hara on the right. Author's collection.



and central Kansas with two excellent houses at Leavenworth on August 16. Prospects for continued success were discouraging as we passed mile after mile of drought-stricken corn, but we were pleasantly surprised by good business in seven of the Kansas stands, fair in two, and poor only in Wichita, where we made a two-day stand on August 21 and 22; and Ft. Scott on the 28th. At Salina on August 20, the show experimented with higher general admission prices: 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children, upped from 35 and 15. The result was encouraging.

Reb Russell, who had won fame as an all-American fullback at Northwestern University and later starred in a few western films in Hollywood, visited the show at Coffeyville, his home town. Talks began between him and the Webbs which, during the following winter, resulted in his being contracted by Russell Brothers as a cowboy concert attraction for the 1936 season. The common Russell name, while only a coincidence, added a note of interest.

Kansas provided a number of annoying incidents, and one serious one. The trouble began at Wichita with the temporary jailing of our fleet leader for speeding and driving through two red lights in the early hours. The Wichita *Eagle* captioned its story as follows: "If Circus Had Followed its Trailblazer it Would Have Landed in Jail." Gangs of kids milling about the lot, threatening to storm the big top, were an annoyance at Wichita.

Coffeyville produced an abundance of trouble including a minor race riot among the show's labor crew and, unrelated to that incident, a tragedy. Just before matinee a group of white big top workers chased a black laborer to the midway and, competing for attention with Doc Oyler's side show bally, pounded him to a pulp.

They claimed he had threatened one of them with a hammer. The victim went for the sheriff, who came looking for the aggressors. He did not find them. All was quiet until about one a.m., when the show's entire personnel was roused from bed by the sheriff and a couple of deputies, and ordered to line up on the midway. The provocation was an alleged attack by a gang of white workers on a group of blacks who had fled to the sheriff's office. The guardians of the law threatened to jail the entire show until the aggressors were found. They settled for 26 white laborers chosen at random, whom they clapped into the clink.

Fixer Harry Seymour argued with the sheriff most of the night, and finally convinced him that to keep the men locked up, in view of their oversized appetites, would probably create a greater expense to the local taxpayers than could be justified, especially in



In 1935 the Springfield Wagon & Trailer Co. built this new ticket wagon for the Russell show. The wagon remained in use through the life of the Russell show and was on the Clyde Beatty show in its early days on rails. Author's collection.

the absence of hard evidence pointing to any specific individual. The men were sprung at 4:30 a.m.. They returned to scramble onto the trucks, which were departing for Parsons.

Then, as the truck carrying the elephant Rubber was leaving

Another special poster used by the Russell show in 1934 and 1935 featured the Fearless Flyers. It was also a Donaldson poster. In 1945 the poster was reworked with the Flying Concellos on the Russell Pan-Pacific Circus. Pfening Collection.

Coffeyville, it made a sharp turn which caused the bull to lurch against the door. A heavy plank had been placed across the open door, about five feet from the floor, to pen Rubber in, and a menagerie hand was standing between the bull and the plank. The impact of the lurching elephant broke the board and Rubber tumbled to the ground, crushing the laborer and killing him instantly.

The tragedy brought a continuation of the visits by the sheriff, both on the road where it occurred, and later in the day and the following night on the lot at Parsons. The coroner's verdict listed the incident as an accidental death and no serious trouble for the show resulted. There was quite a lot of publicity both within and without our immediate territory, but that probably





The Russell Bros. Circus side show bannerline at Stevens Point, Wisc., July 4, 1935. Author's collection.

did at least as much good as it did harm. Business was good at Parsons on August 26 and fair at Chanute on the 27th.

The elephant Rubber damaged a toe in the fall, which had to be amputated.

Business at three Missouri stands ranged from poor to fair. At the request of the Springfield city officials, the show lent elephants, camels, ponies, horses, and female riders to participate in the city's Labor Day parade. Mr. Fellows, owner of the Springfield Wagon & Trailer Company, which had built our new office wagon, visited the show.

On September 4 we began an 11-stand tour of northwestern and north central Arkansas with a 106-mile move over rough gravel roads to Batesville. The Arkansas experience was a dismal one, due to a late cotton crop and the approach of the Cole Brothers Circus, with consequent heavy billing competition. There were plenty of lot-lots in Arkansas, but relatively few spenders. Rumors of an early closing date began to circulate.

Business picked up at Texarkana on Monday, September 16 following a no-show Sunday dedicated largely to waterproofing the big top which had been inaugurated on July 14. The delay was due to extended dry weather, with no heavy rain (prerequisite to parafining) for about two months until September 9.

Following stands at Clarksville and Paris, in northeastern Texas, the show began an 11-day tour of Oklahoma at Idabel on September 19. The big news that day was the announcement that the season would close on October 3, which was about a month ahead of the usual wind-up date. The decision reflected the management's deep disappointment. At Springfield, Missouri on Labor Day, prospects had been good for the best season in the history of Russell Brothers Circus. A couple of good months in the south, which nor-

mally could be depended on in the early fall, would have sent the show home with a healthy nest egg. Now it would do well to break even.

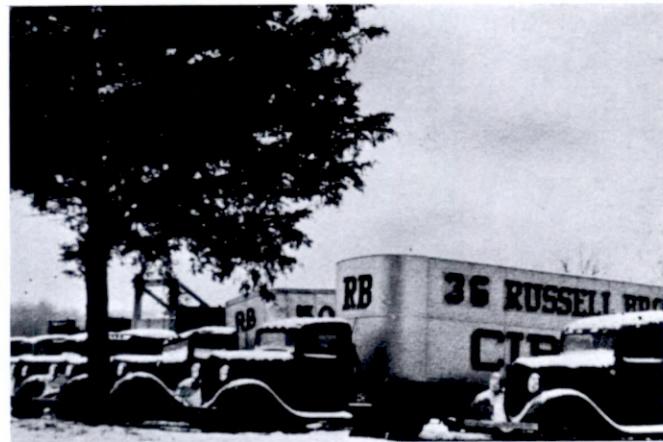
The Webbs, following their annual fall custom, sent an ad to the *Billboard* announcing that Russell Brothers Circus was for sale. There were no takers. In the meanwhile, discussions were going on relative to returning to the cotton territory with a smaller show following the closing.

Oklahoma business was spotty and complicated to some extent by the presence of the Tom Mix Circus, which preceded us in Durant and followed us in Altus and Alva. Francis Kitzman, our brigade agent, descended on Alva in the wee hours one morning, covering the Mix paper (which had already covered ours) and countering Mix-spread rumors that Russell Brothers had disbanded.

Two stands in Kansas brought the season to a close. Pratt provided fair-to-good business on October 2, and Hutchinson, following a disappointing matinee, produced a straw night house. The hospitality at Hutchinson, which had not had a circus for the past four or five years, was tremendous. The police turned their squad cars into taxis to take us to and from the center of the city any time we wanted to go.

Claude Myer's big show band played "Auld Lang Syne" at the close of the

Two clowns are shown in the spec of the Russell show in 1935. Pfening collection.



This winter scene shows the Russell trucks covered with snow in the Rolla, Missouri, winter quarters. Author's collection.

night show, and the side show band followed with "Home Sweet Home."

Rossele Brothers Circus

Near the end of the 1935 season a decision was made to form a mini-circus and return to smaller towns in the cotton country following the season's close. The reduced unit was under the management of E.C. Richards, Russell Brothers assistant manager, and Bob O'Hara, superintendent of reserved seat and banner sales. They leased from Claude and Pauline Webb all of the animals, about half of the rolling stock, and the tents minus the big top. The menagerie tent served as the big top, and the side show tent housed both side show and menagerie.

The name "Rossele Brothers Circus" was chosen in order to reduce to a minimum the job of repainting the trucks. George Werner and Elvin Welsh went along as lot superintendent and menagerie superintendent, respectively. I handled the office wagon, and Claude and Pauline came along as observers. The performance was made up of the least expensive of the Russell Brothers acts.

The experiment, if not a complete disaster, came close to it. There were 20 stands: one in Kansas (Anthony); seven in Oklahoma (Cherokee, Fairview, Geary, Chandler, Okemah, Checotah, and Stigler); six in Arkansas (Van Buren, Paris, Clarksville, Atkins, Morriston, and Lonoke); and six in Russell Brother's home state of Missouri (Carruthersville, Kennett, Malden, New Madrid, Portageville, and Charleston). Much of the weather was cold or wet, and frequently both. There was competition from a small show called Barney Brothers Circus in Arkansas, and we followed Rooney Brothers Circus in Missouri. Of the 20 stands, only eight provided fair-to-good business.

Memories of Big Show Travels

By Kenneth D. Hull

"THE FLAGS UP, LET'S MAKE THE COOKHOUSE"

The circus has been within this country now for well over a hundred years and during this great period of time it has seen many changes. Back in the 20s, 30s, and forties, yes, even the early fifties the big rail circus was a sight to behold. It was huge in its overall size, it was strange, and it, for the most part, was most interesting to the townies waiting to be entertained when one of these traveling shows would come to their city.

To most, all seemed to be confusion as wagon after wagon was rapidly rolled off the brightly painted trains and moved away toward the circus lot itself. On the lot one would find still more, what appeared to be, confusion but soon one would figure out this over here was a certain part or department of this now fast growing city that was being erected all over today's lot and one of the parts that was now well up into the air and operating was the dining department. It said right on the side of the wagons that this was the dining department, so it had to be. Now for those on the show this was not true as all we ever heard it called was the cook house and these two words took in a lot of territory. There were hundreds of peculiar terms learned and heard on the big railroad circus but one of the most popular was this, "let's make the cook house," meaning let's go eat.

During the seasons of 1938 while on the Al G. Barnes Sells-Floto Circus and then again in 1940 on the big Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus this watching for the flag to go up calling us to the cook house became

Barnes cookhouse wagon No. A had a refrigerator compartment with access from a door on the other side. A 16 x 24 foot tent was attached to the back side. Bernard photo.



This view of the cookhouse of the Al G. Barnes and Sells-Floto Circus was taken after the Ringling-Barnum Features were added in 1938. The No. 23 water wagon is on the right and steam boiler wagon No. C is on the left. The kitchen tent is in the center. Pfening collection.

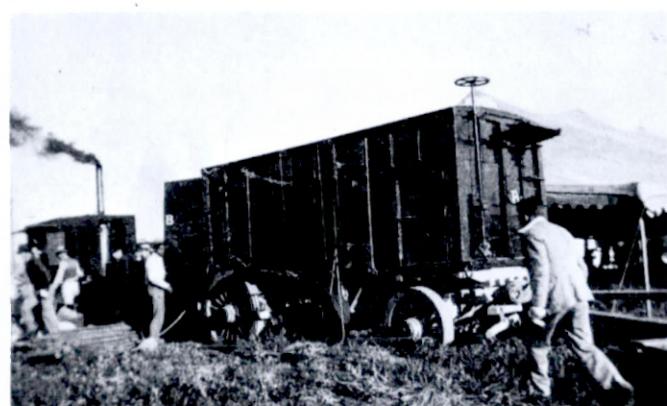
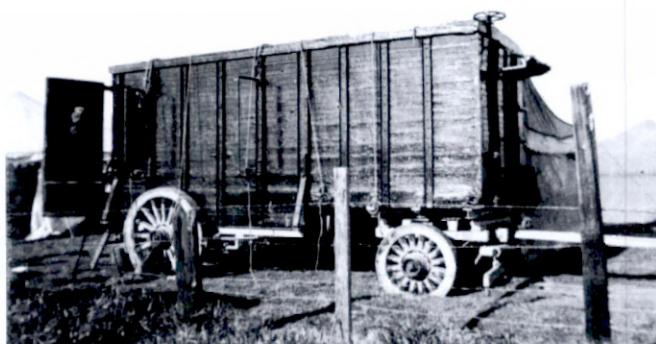
a pretty regular part of our lives. This dining department in itself was big and for the majority of all circus personnel was one of the most important aspects of the daily grind on one of these big shows. Overall the set-up of the cook house was pretty much the same on both shows but the parts used to make up this dining department did vary so much due mostly to the difference in size of both circuses.

George Tipton was the steward or superintendent of the cook house on the Barnes circus for many years before this show was taken off the road at the end of the '38 season. George was a huge man but not fat. He was well up in years being over seventy so the hardships of being of the road in those days must have been difficult for him. This big man would stand at the entrance of the cook house always wearing a pleasant smile for everyone that entered his domain and he had to be a most kindly man and he always looked

so proper standing there wearing a business suit. I helped pay off this department many, many times but am not exactly certain how many would be making up Tipton's crew to run this big part of the Barnes circus but it had to be at least thirty persons or more. I know there were two head waiters and at least twenty other waiters for the tables. The department had a chef and five or more cooks plus I know there was someone to fire the boiler wagon and others doing this job or that. Now if the show back then had say four hundred and fifty persons making up the total of all personnel this cook house part of the show would be nearly seven or eight percent of all.

Seldom did it vary having this complete part of the circus to be the first to be unloaded and heading for the lot and many mornings while all of this was taking place it might still be nearly dark. On the Barnes circus during its last years on the road three wagons lettered A, B and C carried the entire dining department but did use a water wagon number 23 as well as a com-

Wagon No. B was the second baggage wagon used by the Barnes show in 1938. This wagon was 16 feet in length. Bernard photo.





The commissary wagon No. 24 was 10 feet long. This wagon is now at the Ringling Museum of the Circus in Sarasota. Bernard photo.

missary wagon #24. The commissary wagon was a new addition to the show for the '38 season. Before this year the show used two water wagons. Wagon C was the boiler wagon, B carried the canvas for the tents and A was the refrigerator wagon and also hauled the supplies to be used on the show. Most of the time the water wagon was spotted right close to the boiler wagon to have water handy. One of the three Mack tractors on the show would keep this wagon in water as was needed. All of the wagons on the Barnes Circus were painted red, had yellow undergear and the wheels were trimmed with black paint. Of course, wagons in the menagerie and the two ticket wagons used on this show had white undergears and the wagons were many different colors.

The three cook house baggage wagons along with the show water wagon would be spotted out in back of the cook house, but the commissary wagon as a rule was right in front of the marquee and off to the left as you entered the dining tent. This was a small wagon being only twelve feet in

CHS member Joe M. Heiser is seated facing the camera in the cookhouse dining top of the Barnes show in 1938. The table and bench jack construction is visible. The dining top was a 30 x 60 foot push pole tent. Heiser photo.



Barnes wagon No. C was the steam boiler and cooking wagon. The wagon was 14 feet in length. Bernard photo.

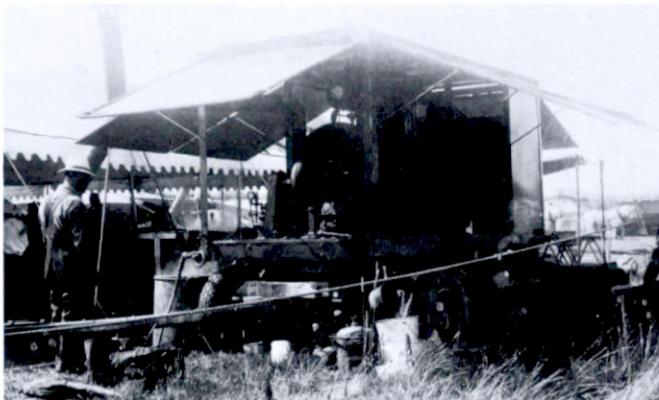
length and sat quite high on springs and high wheels. The door to enter was on the left of the wagon but Winnie Wakling who operated this part of the show worked out of a door on the back end of the wagon. He dispensed items like cigarettes, chewing tobacco, work gloves, tee shirts and other items to wear. He would also lend the working men money handing the individual four dollars but getting back five when repaid so this was a well paying position for those in the commissary wagon. They could not lose as they had the first week's salary as a hold back and since the personnel in wagon 24 worked very closely with the time keeper over on the front end of the show working out of the white ticket wagon it was impossible for any working man to leave the show and owe money. A lot of gum, candy bars and the like was also sold from this commissary wagon to anyone on the show.

Most of tomorrow's food was purchased in today's town and after the cook house crew checked the invoices for what had been ordered, the town grocers then went to the red ticket wagon to get their money. Have to say right here that seldom, if ever, was one served a bad meal on one of these big circuses. Breakfast might be cakes with bacon and eggs. Often times it

could be pork chops or even steaks. There was cereal, both hot and cold, and coffee and more coffee. Lunch would be weiners with beans and other hot items or it could be cold plates with numerous foods to select from, then in the evening another fine big meal like say a roast or boiled dinner of some kind and again a lot of it. The shows had to feed well as the working crews worked so hard and so long that a good cook house was one of the means of keeping a good crew together on most shows.

The Barnes cook house where the food was actually cooked was a push pole tent and was hipped roofed with side walls seven feet high. The dining tent was also a push pole top and hip roofed and was again seven feet high at the side poles and had a tiny marquee out on the front that served as entrance to this top where we ate. The tables in this dining top were twelve feet in length and so seated six people on either side. One sat on planks that were also twelve feet long and no more than six inches wide. These were placed on jacks that were near each end of the table with another running across the center. The table was covered with a red and white checkered tablecloth and paper napkins were used. One waiter was there to tend several tables and always did a remarkable job. Personnel were all assigned seats at the beginning of the season and this was done by rank and the caste system that all shows used back in those days. My wife was a performer and I ran a tax box, then worked in time keeping, then was moved to the red ticket wagon on the Barnes circus so we could walk to the cook house together but never once did we get to eat together. Her table was with the bally girls just inside of the dining tent while mine was away off on the other side near the staff and ticket sellers and where the waiters first came into the dining tent so we could be waited on quickly as we were always busy and performers could, at least most of the time, not be in a hurry.





Ringling-Barnum steam boiler wagon No. 2 was built by the Cleaver-Brooks Co., of Milwaukee, Wisc., in 1936 and was shipped to the show during its stand in LaCrosse, Wisc. on August 15, 1936. During the winter of 1940-41 the wagon was

and have time to talk and enjoy their meals.

The dining top had seven center poles running down through the tent. It had a canvas curtain dividing the tent and it might be right in the exact center of this long top but it had what was called the long end and the short end. On the long end being for the working men and the short end was for the staff and the performers. The same food was served at both ends of this long tent but on the short end the staff and the performers received crockery plates and cups from which to eat while on the working men's side of the tent they used metal utensils for their eating. Bosses such as the boss bull man, the boss canvas man and bosses of various other departments ate on the long side having a long bosses table made up for them using the lengths of two or more regular table tops. This of course kept order in the top and all was most proper on the short side of this tent where it was most of the time a very pleasant place to be regardless of the cold or the heat.

Performers and staff members watched for the cook house flag to be

Cookhouse baggage wagon No. 3 is shown in front of the dining tent. Pfening collection.



returned to Cleaver-Brooks for reconditioning. The boiler was oil fired replacing wood burning units on the show. Steam from this unit was connected to steam kettles and tables as well as the dish washing wagon. Potter photo.

raised from atop one of the end center poles then off they could go to be fed and when they got to the cook house marquee go right in no questions asked. For the working man it was different. This individual had to be issued a working man's ticket by his boss in order to get admission to the cook house. This was done by presenting a cook house ticket for each meal. Said ticket would measure two inches by an inch and a quarter and say Al G. Barnes on one line with, say, Thursday, April the 22nd. Across the center it would have the crew, say, train on it and say the word breakfast. Off to the left of this ticket would be a big number, say, 13 which in this case might mean the train crew and was easy to see. This ticket had to be given to the steward or one of his assistants in order to enter the dining tent.

The help came and went so often on these big rail shows plus many times a boss might want to hold his entire crew until a certain job like guying out the big top was completed then hand out the tickets to go eat on. If it was time for breakfast the staff and performers might go to the cook house as they arrived on the lot but never until the flag was telling all that everything was set and ready.

Will get back soon to more of what



The long end of the dining tent of the Ringling-Barnum in 1940 was used by working men. A canvas curtain separated the two sections of the tent. Pfening collection.

took place inside the dining top but have to get on first with some of what it took to make up the BBBB cook house department. This was a truly big show back then and carried a big cook house and it was most outstanding. This circus used eight wagons plus a commissary wagon to transport the equipment for the cook house. No. 1 was the water wagon and this wagon was 15' long. No. 2 was the steam wagon and this was a shorty for Ringling being only 12' long. No. 3 was 16' long and was a drop frame wagon that carried ranges. No number 4 wagon was used in 1940 but a #127 dish washer truck was used. No. 5 was another baggage wagon holding dishes and was 18' in length, No. 6 was also 18' long and the last No. 8 was twenty feet long and loaded the canvas and poles for the cook house department. Again all of these wagons were near where they could be off the flats first thing and hurriedly moved to the circus lot but understand, other wagons or pieces of equipment on both the Barnes and the Ringling shows might be loaded right in along with these cook house wagons. Equipment like stake drivers, Mack and cat tractors and the

Cookhouse baggage wagon No. 6 was of steel construction and was 18 feet long. Potter photo.





The dish washer was mounted on an International truck that was 18 feet long. This view shows steam rising from the

blacksmith wagon all might be loaded so as to be off the flats in a hurry. I have seen the No. 8 on RBBB be the first wagon off the flats, then be followed by a big cat tractor, then one of the Macks, then wagon No. 3 and these three pieces of equipment made up the first flat to be unloaded. The loading order would depend on so many things like mud, how far to the lot and the condition of same.

In the RBBB 1940 program it states there are seventy-six people making up the cook house department headed by George Blood with five assistants. I have a list of all personnel in all departments on the show that year and it shows a total of ninety-seven persons being used and for a show having fifteen to sixteen hundred people on the payroll the cook house could use nearly the hundred persons listed.

Ringling ran a beautiful cook house. They used a round end top having seven center poles with four being bale ring and the other three push poles. The top must have been a seventy with three fifty foot middle pieces but did not have quarter poles. As on Barnes the side wall was seven feet high and like on Barnes a small marquee was used for the entrance. Working men over here had to have the ticket with which to go eat and again the top had a long side for the working crews and the short side for the staff and performers. My wife and I could go to the cook house together but again she ate with the performers while on this show I ate with the ticket men, doormen and those working in the wagons and as on Barnes, her table was right inside the top while mine was across the tent pretty close to where the waiters brought in the food. This food was prepared in back in the cook house tent itself, a top measuring around 68' by 28'. This was a push pole top that housed I would say at least eight big ranges.

Again like on Barnes there was excellent food and a lot of it and the crews did so much to making eating a plea-

trays after they have come from the washing machine. The steam boiler wagon is at the right. Pfening collection.

sant experience. Our waiters got tipped a dollar a week and they had better receive this tip. They dressed the tables with items like salt, pepper, butter, mustard, ketchup, and the like and saw that all was always in good supply. I recall that on Barnes we had milk for cereal served in a big pitcher but on RBBB we tipped an extra quarter a week to get milk to drink. On the big Ringling show many times we would be able to select from three different entries for a Sunday and days like the 4th of July it was chicken and ice cream for all. At each and every meal one could have seconds and even thirds if so desired.

Waiters wore white jackets and as I remember my waiter on RBBB was named Rodney and the man was good. On Barnes since there was no show bus everyone walked to the cook house for every meal but on The Big Show they used show buses and so many times in the mornings the bus would hurry performers and staff members right to the front door of the cook house. Barnes Sells-Floto seemed to be in on time for most stands and one could

Commissary wagon No. 14 was parked at the entrance to the dining tent. It was 19 feet long and had a dropped floor. Pfening collection.



Cookhouse baggage wagon No. 5 carried the tables and seats on the side. It had a dropped frame in the back half and was 17 feet long. Pfening collection.

walk to the show grounds, proceed right to the cook house and go in and be served. On RBBB we rode the fourth section and this big circus was having a rainy season in 1940 and so was late many times getting in so when we would arrive on the lot breakfast had been served and was all out and over so we could then wait and eat lunch that was to be served soon.

You might have seen many show people downtown at night in your town getting a bit to eat before proceeding to the cars. This was due to the fact they had had their evening meal at the show grounds so early. Seldom did the cook house miss serving later than five in the afternoon and if you were seated and eating most likely the tear down had begun and this part of the circus was getting ready to move back to the train for tomorrow's town. On Ringling and when having the late shows many times a performer would run to the cook house, be fed and get back to do the next act while we ticket sellers would take a break from pushing the concert or after show tickets and a few at a time go grab supper.

Now back to the caste system on these big shows, and the way people were seated. The tables were not as a rule all filled at any one time. A few



members of the show would enter the tent then others would follow so a waiter would have some being fed while he went back to get food for others. Performers and even families would be seated together as long as it was a family. The side show people might have two or three long tables all set end to end down through the middle of the tent while the staff like the wagon men, the ticket sellers and the doormen would all be eating along the back side of the tent. At all times things under control with nothing ever of a rowdy nature going on.

People would carry on conversation about the day's activities, the weather and perhaps something about yesterday's town or have you been downtown or shopped here or did you see that? Both circus cook houses that we ate in were run in a most business-like manner and it was a joy to eat in them every meal.

If today you can see a picture of the circus dining tent note how clean the canvas appears. The tents were called the white tops but after a few weeks in the rain and mud they should have been called the brown tops for this was the color they had become. The underside of the dining tent on most shows was still a good clean white on the underside at least. If the lot was a grassy one the top would remain clean. If it was mud or sandy or cinders as many were, the shows would first spread a lot of straw on the ground then spread and erect the canvas. To lace any top men had to crawl over the canvas but this would be on the top or outside and it would be possible to look up while inside the top and see footprints of mud but I assure you the inside was nearly as spotless as the first day the canvas was used.

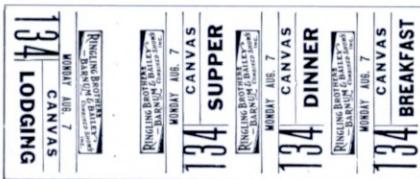
The wind at many stands could blow so bad that it was difficult to keep the dust and sand out of the food. The waiters would have the tableclothes turned back over the tables and turn them down for you only as you arrived to eat making an effort to keep all clean. These fellows spent a lot of their days being on a fast run to the cook tent and into the dining tent to serve the food and return the soiled plates and the like. They first of all had to set up this dining tent and unload and arrange all of the tables in the correct order so they did get a work out for sure.

I never did see a light of any kind inside a circus eating top. There were none. They might erect the top while it was nearly dark but for the tear down it would still be late afternoon and this went on without lights. On the Barnes circus they used to give an afternoon show only out in the west where the distance was great but still they would serve all three meals and then tear down and get ready to load out. Many times on both shows because the lot

was tight, means being quite small, the cook house would be set up across the street from the main part of the show or it could be it was located even blocks away from the rest of the show so when you reached the lot you had to ask to find out where the cook house was located. You would not believe how they could hide the cook house.

A thing that used to bug me was during hot days the side wall might be tied up to the tent guy ropes allowing air to go through the top and in every town the townsmen would get down on their knees looking inside to see all that was taking place. To them I suppose we all were freaks so to speak.

In 1938 Barnes was still using draft stock and even to this day I can still see the big beautiful eight horse hitches all hooked to the cook house wagons waiting the go ahead to leave for the runs. They would be hitched and set to go while the crews were still loading the wagon, hurrying to get it on its way for tomorrow's town. On Ringling-Barnum and while between performances all could be out and over at the cook house and again the big red



The working men were issued dated tickets for their meals and berth on the train. They were given out each day by the department bosses. Pfening collection.

wagons were being loaded but this time it was tractors hooked to the wagons and ready to move on to the trains. Things were changing on this circus and I have seen four wagons behind one tractor all from the cook house but every wagon would be wearing a different kind of wheel. One might be the old steel tired wheel, another be on rubber tires needing air, and the other two on solid rubber tires. The Barnes stoves and ranges may have all used wood or coal but Ringling was now using oil but overall the cook house remained about the same on both shows.

As to the cook house flag that called us to eat, since Barnes used a push pole top the flag flew from a steel pipe from what was the number one center pole and on Ringling they used the tall wooden flag staffs on all center poles and while an American or some other flag flew from the four main center poles of their dining top the number one pole was used for the Ringling Hotel flag that when in the air said it was time to eat.

Looking back even to me, it is unbelievable that either of these shows could have arrived into today's town,



Herbert Sicks is shown in the selling window of the commissary wagon during the 1940 season. Photo from Nation's Business magazine.

set up, feed all the hundreds of people that were on the show then tear down, load up and move say a hundred miles to tomorrow's town then repeat the entire process day after day. On RBBB once or twice moves of over two hundred miles were made and the show went on right on time and the entire organization all got fed three fine meals while all of this was going on.

This took some doing and know how and today I do not think it could be done at all. The hard working people, the know how is no longer there, so the big circus is gone and I for one look for it to never come back.



Coupon books were sold on each show containing vouchers in various amounts, some for a dollar, some for five cents. These "dukie" vouchers could be redeemed in the purchase of goods or food at the commissary wagon on the lot or in the pie car on the train. Each book required the owner's name and department. The books were printed by ticket printing companies like Weldon, Williams & Lick, of Ft. Smith, Ark. and Argus Ticket Co., of Chicago, Ill. Pfening collection.



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